



THE LIBERTY "76" BOYS OF 76

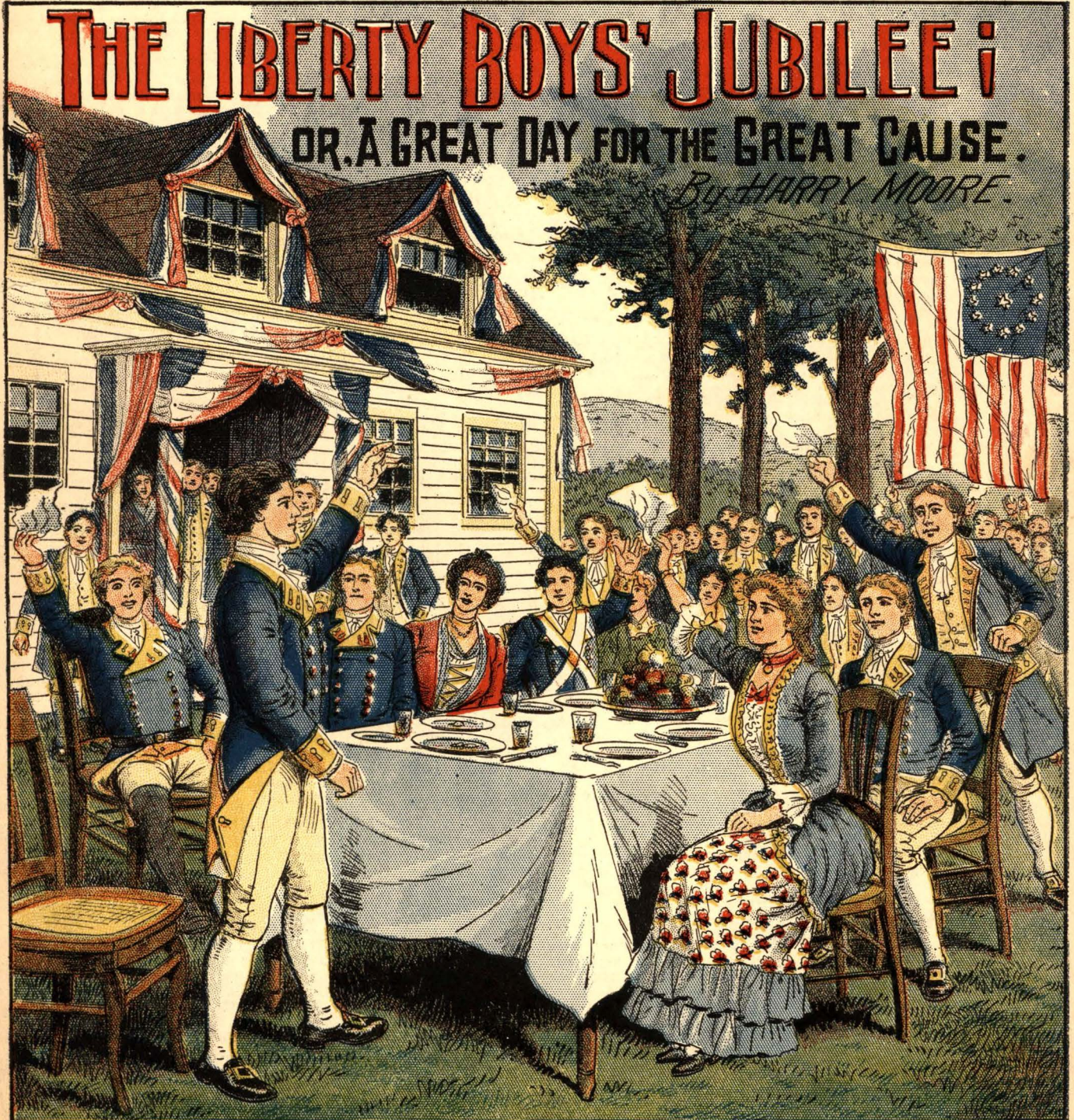
A Weekly Magazine containing Stories of the American Revolution.

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No. III.

NEW YORK, FEBRUARY 13, 1903.

Price 5 Cents.



At the close of the banquet Dick Slater made a speech which abounded in patriotic utterances, and the "Liberty Boys" and the beautiful maidens applauded him enthusiastically.

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NEW YORK, FEBRUARY 13, 1903.

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CHAPTER I.

A REIGN OF TERROR.

It was the autumn of the year 1778.

The War of the Revolution was in full blast.

At the time of which we write all the Southern States were in a turmoil.

There was much partisan warfare in North and South Carolina and Georgia.

General Robert Howe, a native of North Carolina, and a strong patriot, but a man with not much ability in a military way, was in command of the little handful of patriots in the South, called an army, and he had headquarters at Savannah, Georgia.

He had tried to put a stop to the work of the Tories of the State, and had sent out parties of soldiers on many occasions, to try to capture, kill, or disperse some of the Tory and guerrilla parties that were doing so much damage to the patriots' plantations, but had not been successful in accomplishing much.

There were some patriot partisan parties, also, but they were not so numerous as were the Tory parties, and just at the time of which we write one Tory band in particular was doing a great deal of damage to patriots.

This party—indeed, it was a guerrilla band—consisted, so it was said, of about two hundred men, and it rendezvoused in some one of the many great swamps within twenty-five to thirty miles of Savannah.

This band was known as "Dobson's Destroyers," the leader of it being a giant of a man, dark-faced and forbidding in appearance, and whose name was Robert Dobson.

This man, it was said by those who had been so unfortunate as to meet him, was a veritable demon, and many cold-blooded murders were laid at his door; in the work of plundering the patriots' plantations his band, under the leadership of "Black Bob," as he was often called, often gave free rein to their ruffianly natures, and burned and pillaged homes, and murdered the patriots.

This had been going on for several months, and it was fast becoming a reign of terror.

The Tory band was so strong that it seemed useless for the patriots to try to do anything against it, yet they wished heartily that something could be done.

But when General Robert Howe sent out a force of soldiers, as he did on several occasions, they either failed to

find Black Bob's band, or were set upon from ambush and given a terrible beating by the desperadoes.

Where Black Bob got so many men was a mystery.

The people of Georgia could hardly believe that there were two hundred such desperadoes and ruffians in Georgia, and so they came to the conclusion that the men had flocked to Black Bob Dobson's standard from all the surrounding States; and in this they were right.

The people kept sending messengers to Savannah to General Howe, telling of outrages that had been perpetrated by the terrible Tory band, and the patriot commander was at his wit's end.

"I would like to help the patriots, and protect their homes," he said, talking with one of his officers after a messenger had been there with a terrible story of plunder and murder by Dobson's Destroyers, "but how am I to do it? I have tried a number of times, and have been unable to find this Black Bob's hiding-place, and then he has generally managed to ambush my men and kill a number of them, and make his escape in safety."

"It certainly is a hard matter to handle," said the other officer. "I don't see what can be done."

"Nor I. When my men go out in search of the Tory band they are greatly handicapped, for they don't know the roads as well as the Tories do, and have practically no knowledge of the paths leading through the swamps, and it is somewhere in the swamps that the Destroyers have their hiding-place."

"Undoubtedly, sir."

"Yet it looks as though something must be done to stop the work of these desperadoes; they grow worse and worse, all the time."

"You are right, sir; they are getting bolder and bolder."

"Yes, they are working closer to Savannah than ever before. For awhile they did no work closer than twenty miles, but now they are coming this way."

"The messenger that was just here said he lived fifteen miles from here, and the home that was pillaged and burned was within a mile of where he lives."

"Yes; that shows the Tory band is gradually coming this way, and if it keeps on will likely burn patriot homes within such a short distance of Savannah as to make it possible for us to see the flames."

At this instant the door of the room in which the general and his officer were seated talking was opened quickly, a distance of perhaps six inches, and something was thrown inside by a human hand, of which the two caught only a

fleeting glimpse. Then the door was pulled shut again, and all was silence.

The act was so unexpected and mysterious that the two were startled and surprised into inaction for a few seconds, during which time they stared at the door, and then their eyes fell upon the object that had been tossed into the room. It looked like a block of wood, with some paper wrapped around it; and while the general stepped forward and picked the object up, the other officer, a captain by the name of George Monroe, leaped to the door, jerked it open, and looked out in the hall.

No one was in sight.

Whoever it was that had opened the door and tossed the object into the room had disappeared, silently and mysteriously.

Captain Monroe walked along the hall to the front of the house and tried the front door.

It was locked, as was customary.

"Where can that fellow have gone?" muttered Monroe.

He could not answer his own question, of course, so he returned to the private room of the general.

"See here, Captain Monroe!" with considerable show of anger and excitement. "Read that!" and the general held out a sheet of paper toward the officer as he spoke.

"Is that what was——"

"Yes; it was wrapped around the block of wood there," indicating a small block which lay on his table.

The captain read the words written on the sheet of paper. They were as follows:

"Gin'ral Howe: I am goin' ter keep on comin' t'wards Savannah, an' wull burn ev'ry rebel home inside uv twenty miles uv ther city, an' then I'm goin' ter start in on ther houses in ther city itself; an' I'll burn ye out like rats outer er hole. Beware! fur I meen ev'ry word I say!

"Black Bob."

"What do you think of that?" asked General Howe, when the captain had finished reading.

"I think it is the most impudent piece of work that has ever come under my notice, General Howe!"

"So do I; but did you get a sight of anyone when you went out in the hall just now?"

"Not a soul."

"That is strange."

"Yes, and it looks as though you are not safe even here in your own private room, general."

"It certainly does seem so. The scoundrel, whoever he was, might just as easily have shot me as throw the block of wood in the room."

"True; but who do you suppose did it—Black Bob himself?"

The general shook his head.

"I hardly think so," he said. "He would scarcely dare venture into Savannah, let alone into the very building used as headquarters by the patriots."

"One would think so. But still, one never knows what such a desperado might do."

"You are right; but how did the scoundrel that threw this in here get past the guard into the building?"

"That is a mystery."

The general at once summoned his orderly.

"James," he said when the man appeared. "Did you admit anyone within the past fifteen minutes?"

"No, sir," was the reply.

"Who was the last person you admitted?"

"Captain Monroe here, sir."

"Humph! Have you seen anyone—any strange person, I mean, in the hall here within the past ten minutes?"

"Oh, no, sir," was the reply, while the man looked surprised. "Why do you ask that, sir?"

"Because some one was in the hall here a few minutes ago—some stranger."

"Impossible!" exclaimed the orderly; and then he added, apologetically: "I beg your pardon, sir, but I don't see how anyone could have gotten in without my knowledge, as the door was locked and bolted."

"He may have entered from the rear."

The orderly started.

"That is possible, sir," he said, "though I thought every door and window was fastened."

"Well, go and see if you can find out how the stranger, whoever he was, entered the house, James."

"Yes, sir; I will do so, sir."

The orderly left the room, and went on his mission, and when he had gone the two officers looked at each other long and inquiringly.

Then the general said, slowly and in a serious, thoughtful voice:

"What do you think about this matter, captain?"

The other shook his head, and looked grave.

"I don't like the looks of the affair at all, sir," he replied.

"Nor do I. You know we have already tried on several occasions to run this Black Bob to earth, and strike him such a severe blow as would break his band up and put a stop to its depredations, but each time we have failed, on several occasions having lost a number of our men."

"Yes, I know that."

"And now here comes this threat, or boast, or both. It worries me, captain."

"I have no doubt of it, sir. It is enough to worry one."

"What shall we do?"

"I hardly know, sir."

The orderly entered at this moment, and said:

"I have examined all the doors and windows at the rear of the house, sir, and find them all fastened."

The officers looked at each other again.

"That is strange," said the general.

"Very strange," said the captain.

At this moment there sounded a knock on the front door.

"Go and see who it is, James," said the general.

The orderly hastened away, and presently he came back, and pausing at the partially open door, said:

"A gentleman to see you, General Howe."

"What is his name?"

"Dick Slater, sir."

CHAPTER II.

DICK SLATER'S ARRIVAL.

General Howe started and uttered an exclamation.

"Dick Slater did you say, James?" he asked, an eager look on his face.

"Yes, sir."

"Jove, I wonder if it can be the real Dick Slater who has done such great work in the North with his company of young men known as 'The Liberty Boys of '76'!" he said, looking inquiringly at Captain Monroe.

"If such should prove to be the case, and he has his men with him, he would be the fellow to put on the trail of Black Bob and his desperate gang," said the captain.

The general nodded.

"You are right," he agreed. "But perhaps, even if it is he, he may be alone."

"You mean that he may have simply come down here as the bearer of despatches, or something of that sort?"

"Yes."

"Perhaps not; he may have his men with him."

"The quickest and best way to find out is by asking him. James, show the gentleman in."

The orderly withdrew, and returned a few minutes later, and ushered a young man of perhaps nineteen years into the room, with the announcement:

"Dick Slater, sir."

General Howe and Captain Monroe looked the newcomer over with interest.

They had heard many stories of the wonderful work of the company of youths known as "The Liberty Boys of '76," and of the still more wonderful work that Dick Slater, their commander, had done as a scout and spy, and they were eager to see if this young man came up to their idea of what Dick Slater would look like.

They saw in the newcomer a handsome, manly-looking young fellow of nineteen or twenty years, with long, slightly curling hair, gray-blue eyes, firm chin, and a complexion bronzed by exposure to almost the hue of that of an Indian. There was something so masterful in the stranger's looks that the two were impressed, and they said to themselves that the newcomer was all they would have expected to see in the famous Dick Slater.

Without seeming to do so the youth, while the two were taking a mental inventory of him, was quietly taking in everything in the room, even to the looks of the two officers themselves, and his survey, while seemingly only a careless glancing about, was much more careful and effective than theirs was.

"Ah, I beg you to excuse me," said General Howe, suddenly becoming conscious of the fact that he had offered the stranger no greeting, "but the name given by my orderly, as being yours, was such a surprise to me that I forgot myself. May I ask if you are the real, genuine Dick Slater, the captain of the company of youths known as 'The Liberty Boys of '76'?"

"My name is Dick Slater, sir, and I am the captain of the youths known as 'The Liberty Boys of '76,'" was the reply.

"I am glad to know you, Captain Slater," said the general, and stepping forward he grasped the youth's hand and shook it heartily.

Then he indicated his brother officer.

"Captain Slater, allow me to make you acquainted with Captain Monroe."

"Glad to make your acquaintance, General Howe; and yours, Captain Monroe," said Dick heartily.

"And I am extremely glad to make your acquaintance, Captain Slater!" said Monroe. "I have heard much regarding you and your 'Liberty Boys,' and have often wished that the commander-in-chief might see fit to send you down in these parts."

"Well, your wish has been gratified, captain," was the smiling reply.

"Do you mean to say that your company of 'Liberty Boys' is with you, Captain Slater?" exclaimed the general.

"Yes, General Howe."

"Good! How fortunate!"

"General Washington has received word from down here several times in the last two or three months," explained Dick, "and he heard so much about the lawlessness of the Tories and guerrillas of Georgia that he decided to send myself and 'Liberty Boys' here, in the hope that we might be able to do something to put a stop to the outrages which are being perpetrated against the patriots in these parts."

"I am only too glad you have come, Captain Slater," said the general. "I have tried to strike the Tories a blow that would discourage them, but have failed in each and every instance. You see, my men are soldiers, and do not understand the work of getting around through the timber and swamps with silence and celerity, and the Tory bands do, and they have a big advantage on that account."

"I can understand that, general; and that is why we were sent here. Myself and 'Liberty Boys' are all skilled in woodcraft, and without boasting I think I can say that we feel sure we can beat the Tories and guerrillas at their own game."

"I hope you may be able to do so," said the general, but there was such a peculiar intonation to his voice that Dick noticed it, and said at once to himself that the speaker had his doubts regarding the matter.

"You hope we may be able to do so; but you have fears that we may fail, sir?" remarked Dick.

"That is it, exactly, Captain Slater. But have a seat. We can be comfortable while we talk."

The three seated themselves, and then as the result of an afterthought the general called to the orderly:

"James."

The man appeared a few moments later.

"Take up your stand in the hall. Patrol it from one end to the other until further orders."

"Yes, sir."

"Keep a sharp lookout for any person who may make an attempt to enter."

"Yes, sir."

Then the orderly went out in the hall, closing the door behind him; then his measured tread was heard as he slowly marched back and forth the length of the hall.

Meanwhile Dick had looked wonderingly and questioningly at the general, and when the door closed behind the orderly he said:

"What does that mean?"

"What, Captain Slater?"

"Why, your placing your orderly on guard in the hall, in your own headquarters. Surely you do not fear anybody entering?"

"Someone did enter, Captain Slater; some unknown person entered this building, in a manner at present unknown to us, and he even had the audacity to open the door there, and toss a block of wood into the room. Around the block of wood was wrapped this sheet of paper," handing the paper to Dick. "Read what is written there, and it will give you some idea regarding the task which you will have on your hands if you are to succeed in breaking up the work of the Tory bands in this part of the country."

The youth took the paper and read what was written on it.

Then he looked up, and asked quietly:

"Who is this fellow, 'Black Bob,' as he signs himself?"

"He is the leader of one of the most desperate and dangerous bands of men that ever terrorized a community, Captain Slater."

"Indeed?"

"Yes."

"How many men are there in his band?"

"It is said that there must be at least two hundred."

The youth gave utterance to a whistle of surprise.

"Phew! A regular little army!" he exclaimed. "Do you think he really has that many men?"

"Judging by what he has accomplished, and the manner in which he has bidden defiance to my men, whom I have sent out after him from time to time, he must have that many, I should say."

"And they are all dangerous, desperate men, eh?"

"Yes; indeed, such a terrible reputation have they won that they are known far and wide as 'Dobson's Destroyers.'"

"Ah! Then is this fellow, Black Bob, named Dobson?"

"Yes, Robert Dobson."

"And his force has committed many depredations among the patriots in this part of the country?"

"Yes, indeed! Why, a reign of terror is on, and the patriots are living in constant fear of their lives."

"Too bad! Well, I am glad we have got here, and there is work for us to do."

"There is no doubt regarding that part of it, Captain Slater," said Captain Monroe. "There is certainly work for you to do, and plenty of it."

Dick looked at the sheet of paper, and once again read the inscription on it.

"That was a very bold thing for Black Bob to do," said Dick. "I mean, the entering of your house and throwing this note in upon you."

"Yes, indeed; but it is just like him."

"How did he manage to get in, do you suppose?"

"Do you think it was Black Bob himself who did that?" asked the general in surprise.

"It is not improbable, sir. But, whether it was or not, somebody did it, and how did that someone get into your house?"

"That is a mystery, Captain Slater."

"Have you made an examination to discover how it was done?"

"James did so."

"Ah, that is your orderly?"

"Yes."

"And he did not learn how the entry was made?"

"No."

"That is strange."

"It is indeed a very mysterious affair."

"I should think you would be afraid to remain here, general. You are likely to be spied on at any time, and just when you least wish it."

"That is true; but I will have a soldier on guard in the hall constantly, both night and day, from now on, and don't think any one will be able to enter and overhear any thing that will be to our detriment; and he may even be captured, if he makes the attempt."

"True; that is a good idea, to have a man on guard constantly."

"I think so."

"Well, general, if you will assign my 'Liberty Boys' to the quarters we will go there at once, and then as soon as we have got settled I will return and talk this matter over with you thoroughly, and decide upon some course of action."

"Very well; Captain Monroe, you go with Mr. Slater, and show him where his 'Liberty Boys' may find quarters."

"Very well, general. Follow me, Captain Slater."

The two saluted the commanding officer and withdrew, Dick having first handed General Howe a large packet which had been sent by General Washington.

CHAPTER III.

DICK MAKES A DISCOVERY.

Captain Monroe went with Dick to where the "Liberty Boys" were, and found them waiting patiently, surrounded

by a crowd of patriot soldiers and citizens of Savannah, asking and answering questions.

"This is Captain Monroe, boys," said Dick. "He will show us where we are to be quartered while in Savannah."

The captain bowed to the youths, and then said:

"This way, gentlemen."

He led the way, Dick and his comrades, of whom there were one hundred, following closely. Each youth led a horse, and the animals were in the main fine-looking.

The captain showed them the house where they would find quarters, and then said:

"You will find a long stable and shed combined back of the house, fronting on the alley. It will hold the horses, I think."

"Thank you," said Dick. "We will get along all right now."

"Very good."

Then the captain took his departure.

The youths led their horses around into the alley, and to the stable; this was found to be sufficiently large to hold all the horses, and when the animals had been attended to, the youths went back around to the front of the house and entered.

They found it a good-sized, well-furnished place, and vacant so far as tenants was concerned.

"Well, this is going to be solid comfort," said Bob Estabrook, who was Dick's right-hand man, and a lifelong friend and comrade.

"I wonder where the owners of the place are?" remarked Mark Morrison.

"Likely they are hiding out in the country somewhere," said Dick.

"Then you think——"

"They were Tories, and fled when the patriot army came into the city," was the reply.

"Ah, likely that is it."

"Well, it makes it pleasant for us," said Sam Sander-son.

"Yes, indeed. And now, scatter, and select your rooms, fellows," said Dick.

The youths soon had their rooms selected, and then they all got together again in the big library.

They began to question Dick, for they wished to know what General Howe had said when he learned that they had come down there to help him.

"He is greatly pleased, fellows," said Dick. "He has been having trouble in trying to run to earth a Tory band, and he has hopes that we may be able to do what he has failed in doing."

"Well, we are just the boys to do it, Dick!" from Bob.

"I don't know about it."

Dick shook his head slowly as he spoke, and there was such a sober look on his face that the youths' curiosity was excited at once.

"What do you mean, Dick?"

"Why, is it a bad crowd?"

"What makes you doubtful, old man?"

"Surely you don't think we will fail in breaking up a Tory band?"

Such were a few of the exclamations.

"But this is not an ordinary Tory band, boys," said Dick. "General Howe says there are at least two hundred men in the party, and that they are a picked lot of desperadoes who will stop at nothing."

"Phew!"

"Two hundred of them!"

"Say, that is a big gang, sure enough!"

"And desperadoes, eh?"

"That is just what they are," replied Dick. "They are desperadoes of the worst sort. They have been robbing, pillaging, and murdering about as they please for two or three months past, and the patriots for miles around are living in constant fear of their lives. It is a reign of terror."

"Well, I think we can put a stop to it, Dick," said Bob Estabrook.

"So do I think so."

"And I!"

"We can do it, if anybody can, Dick!"

The "Liberty Boys" had been so successful in whatever they undertook that they were very confident, and this was a great aid to them in working; confidence helps wonderfully.

"We'll have a try at it at any rate," said Dick.

"Where does this gang stay, Dick?" asked Bob. "Does anybody know?"

"No; only that it must have headquarters in some one of the many swamps in this part of the country."

"Ah, in the swamps, eh?"

"Yes."

"That gives them a big advantage; they know the swamps, and we don't."

"That's right; that is the reason the soldiers who have gone out in search of the Tories on several occasions have had such poor luck."

"Then there have been attempts made to strike the gang?"

"Yes, a number of attempts."

"And failure was the result in each and every instance?"

"Yes, and nearly every time the patriot soldiers lost some of their men. The Tory band ambushed them, shot some of them down, and then escaped."

"Humph! It must be a pretty bold and desperate crowd."

"So it is; the party is known far and wide by the name of 'Dobson's Destroyers.'"

"Then their leader's name must be Dobson."

"It is; Robert Dobson. He is also known in these parts as Black Bob."

"A suitable name, as I should judge, for his deeds are deeds of blackness, if half of what you say he is said to have been guilty of is true."

"You are right. Well, you boys make yourselves com-

fortable, while I go back to headquarters and have another talk with General Howe."

"All right, Dick."

The youth left the house, and was soon back at headquarters.

General Howe had finished reading the letter from the commander-in-chief, and greeted Dick pleasantly.

"How do you like your quarters?" he asked.

"Fine," said Dick. "They are better than any we have occupied for some time."

"That house is the home of a wealthy Tory, who fled when we entered Savannah. I suppose he thought that 'rebels,' as they call us, are savages, and that they would be murdered if they remained."

"Quite likely," said Dick. "Well, I am glad they did go, as it makes a splendid place for us to stay."

Then General Howe, Captain Monroe, and Dick talked the matter over thoroughly.

All the information regarding Black Bob and his band that was in the general's possession was given Dick, and then he was told that he was at liberty to go ahead and work the matter out in his own way.

"I won't handicap you by giving you any instructions or orders," the general said. "General Washington says in his letter to me that he has absolute confidence in you, and that is sufficient for me. I shall let you do this work in your own manner."

"Thank you," said Dick. "And I believe that is the best thing to do, too. If this matter is put through to a successful issue it must be gone at in a very careful way. We shall have to meet cunning with cunning, and shall have to employ the same tactics against them that they have been in the habit of employing."

"So you will."

"How will you go about it, Captain Slater?" asked Captain Monroe.

"Well, I haven't fully decided as yet," was the reply. "I shall have to give the matter considerable thought."

"I should judge so," said the general. "It is a difficult task you have set yourself to accomplish, and as in working out any difficult problem, you will need to study the ground thoroughly before beginning work."

"True, sir. And now, if you have no objections, I would like to make an examination of the doors and windows of this house, to see if I can learn where and how the person entered who tossed that block of wood with the message on it in here."

The general looked somewhat surprised, but said at once:

"Why, go ahead, Captain Slater; and if you can find out how he got in I shall be glad."

The youth asked that James, the orderly, be allowed to accompany him in his rounds of the building, and the general called James.

Then Dick and the orderly began work.

They examined every door and window on all the floors, and at both the front and the rear of the building. Then

they went down into the cellar, and made an examination there.

When they had finished Dick turned toward James and said:

"No one entered this building from outside, James; whoever threw that block into the general's room was already in the house."

"You don't say so, sir!" exclaimed James.

"I do say so, and unless you have fastened some of the windows since the time the block was thrown into the general's room then the person who did it is still in the house!"

The youth looked straight into the orderly's eyes, and he noted that the man's face looked somewhat pale.

This caused a suspicion to flash into his mind, but he did not let it show on his face. He simply remarked:

"How many people are there in the building besides yourself and the general, James?"

"Three, sir."

"Who and what are they?"

"They are all three colored. One is the cook and house-keeper, another is her husband, and the third is their daughter, a girl of seventeen or eighteen."

"Humph! I should not expect to find either of the three to be the guilty person."

James shuffled uneasily, and eyed Dick inquiringly.

"Surely you don't—don't——"

"But I do, James," said Dick, quietly. "I am confident that you are the guilty person, and have suspected it all along."

"Take that!" cried the orderly, and he struck at Dick, viciously.

CHAPTER IV.

A FIERCE STRUGGLE.

If James thought he would be able to take Dick Slater unawares he made a mistake.

The "Liberty Boy" was on his guard.

He had expected nothing else than that the fellow would attack him when accused of being the person who had thrown the block into the general's room, and when the blow was struck he was ready for it.

He ducked, and the orderly's fist went over his shoulder.

At the same instant he struck out with his own fist.

It landed fair between the man's eyes, knocking him down.

The blow was a hard one, and the fall must have jarred the fellow considerably, but he was evidently an exceedingly tough man, for he rolled over and over two or three times in quick succession, and then leaped to his feet and bounded toward Dick with the ferocity of a maddened panther.

"I'll kill you!" he hissed. "I'll strangle the life out of you, you rebel hound!"

The "Liberty Boy" struck the fellow a couple of strong blows, but he was coming with such force that it did scarcely more than check him a bit; and then he seized Dick, giving utterance to a growl of satisfaction as he did so.

This warned the youth that the man might prove to be a dangerous customer.

However, the "Liberty Boy" was very strong himself, and was, moreover, supple and athletic, and quite capable of continuing a desperate combat for an hour, if necessary, and he had no fears regarding the ultimate outcome.

Still, he found, on grappling with James, that the fellow was wonderfully strong.

He was almost, if not quite, as strong as Dick.

This was a surprise, but it did not daunt the youth.

He was always ready to try conclusions with an enemy in any way, shape, or form, and he had never yet met his master in a hand-to-hand combat, though he had encountered one or two who were his match.

There was plenty of room in the cellar, and the two fought backward and forward, hither and thither, swaying, struggling, and each striving to get the better of the other.

James fought with the desperation of despair.

Evidently he realized that if he succumbed and was made a prisoner by Dick he would meet with the fate always meted out to traitors.

It was death for him if he gave in, while so long as he kept on fighting there was a chance that he might escape.

It was a terrible combat, the more so because it was fought in absolute silence, save for the noise made by the feet shuffling on the cellar floor.

Of course James would not cry out, for anyone who came in response to a call would be an enemy, and would help make him a prisoner, and Dick disdained to call for help.

"I will show this tricky scoundrel that there are better men than he abroad in the land," said he to himself. "I will prove to him that there are patriots who are a match for any traitor or Tory who ever lived."

James wondered why Dick did not call for aid, but was very glad that he did not do so. The combat went on fiercely.

Almost over where the two were struggling for the mastery, talking in blissful unconsciousness of what was going on below them, were the general and the captain.

All the time they had been struggling, so far, Dick had been working to secure a certain hold.

At last he was successful, and he gave utterance to a sigh of satisfaction.

Then, before James knew what was happening, he found himself lifted from the floor; up in the air he went, forced upward by Dick's strong arms, assisted by his shoulder, used as a pry; then the orderly's feet described a half-circle in the air, thumping against the floor above as they

did so, and down upon the hard floor went the traitor with a crash.

The "Liberty Boy" purposely fell upon the fellow with all his force, and his purpose was accomplished; James was stunned, and lay there, face downward, dazed and helpless.

General Howe and Captain Monroe heard the thump as the feet of James struck the floor underneath where they sat, and leaped up in alarm.

"What was that?" exclaimed the general.

"I don't know," the captain replied. Then he added:

"Perhaps Captain Slater and James have upset something down in the cellar."

This was partly correct. Dick had upset something.

"Likely you are right," agreed the general.

Having gained the advantage he was looking for and working to secure, Dick was not slow to take advantage of the situation.

He drew a handkerchief from his pocket, and quickly tied the wrists of James securely.

By the time he had finished the orderly had recovered control of his faculties, and he at once tried to renew the struggle, only to find he could not. His hands were bound, and he could not get them free.

The "Liberty Boy" rose and looked down upon his late opponent, who had whirled over upon his back as soon as he recovered.

"Well, my tricky friend, you made a mistake this time, didn't you?" said Dick.

A growl was the only reply.

"You thought you would easily get the better of me, and then make your escape, didn't you, eh?" went on the youth.

"I'll kill you some day!" hissed the man, viciously.

"You will not live to get the chance, my dear sir," was the reply. "Is it possible that you do not know the fate that awaits a traitor?"

The fellow turned pale, but he was possessed of considerable nerve, for he growled out:

"Yes, I know the fate that is usually meted out to traitors, but I'm not a traitor."

"You are not?" exclaimed Dick. He wished to draw the fellow out and see what scheme he had in mind.

"No, I am not."

"Then why did you attack me when I accused you?"

"That is simple enough. I know you are Dick Slater, and that what you say will have great weight with the general, and when you said I was the one who had thrown the block of wood into the general's office I was startled, and although innocent, I attacked you, with the idea that I would get out and away, rather than risk facing your charge, for as I have said I was afraid he would believe what you said."

The "Liberty Boy" smiled.

"Very good; very good, indeed, James," he said. "You are a pretty good liar, and you are a bold fellow, too; but

it will avail you nothing. You are trapped, and there is no escape for you."

"I am innocent, I tell you."

"Bah! But see here, James; if you will make a clean breast of it, and tell all about Black Bob, and do all you can to help us locate the fellow and his gang, I will intercede in your behalf, and will do what I can to get the general to be easy on you."

"Will you really?" the fellow asked, eyeing Dick searchingly.

"I will. If you could tell us where the rendezvous of Black Bob is I think I could get you off with very light punishment."

James shook his head.

"I don't know where the rendezvous is," he said.

"You are sure?"

"Yes; if I knew I would tell. I will accept your proposition, as it is, and tell all I know, if you will do your best to get me off with only a light punishment."

"Agreed. Get up, and come along upstairs, and make the confession in the presence of the general."

The youth took the man by the arm, and assisted him to rise, and then they made their way upstairs and to the general's private room.

When the two officers saw the two enter, and noted that James was a prisoner, his arms being tied behind him, they stared in open-mouthed amazement.

"W-what d-does this m-mean, Captain Slater?" the general exclaimed, after he had recovered from his amazement in a sufficient measure so as to be able to speak.

"It means that I have found the man who threw the block of wood into your room, General Howe," was the calm reply.

The officers stared.

"You don't mean—James!"

"Yes, James is the man. I suspected it from the first."

"Well, well! This is indeed unexpected. But why did you suspect him?"

"Because I did not see how anyone could have entered from the outside and done the work, and escaped again without being seen by James."

"Ah!"

"And when I found that all the windows and doors were fastened on the inside, and James himself told me he had not found any unfastened after the occurrence of the incident, I was positive someone within the house had done it. Then he said there were only three colored persons in the house other than you and himself. I was sure he was the guilty party, and accused him."

"Ah! And he acknowledged his guilt, did he?"

"Not right away," with a smile. "I had to argue the matter with him awhile."

As there was a large contusion on James' face, where Dick's fist had struck him, and one eye was growing black, and as the clothing of both was somewhat awry, the two officers understood what the "Liberty Boy" meant when he said he had to argue the matter, and they smiled.

"I see," said the general. "Well, you seem to have got the better of the argument."

"Yes, so I did; but now, sir, James has promised to make a clean breast of the affair if you will be easy on him."

The general eyed the man sternly.

"Do you think you deserve any clemency at my hands?" he asked. "Do you think that a sneak and traitor such as you have proved yourself to be deserves anything short of the hangman's noose?"

James shuffled his feet in an uneasy manner.

"Well, if you won't promise to be easy on me I won't tell what I know about Black Bob and his band," was the sullen reply.

"Well, does what you know about him amount to much? Will it enable us to get a good chance at Black Bob and his gang?"

"I can't say, sir; I can only tell you what I know, and then let you be the judge as to that."

"I think it will be a good plan to promise to be easy on him, General Howe," said Dick. "The information which he has to give may be of benefit to us."

"Very well, then; go ahead, James," sternly. "I will promise that you shall not be hanged or shot; that is the best I can do at present."

"All right, sir. Then I'll tell you all I know about Black Bob and his band."

CHAPTER V.

A SURPRISE.

The fellow told his story.

The gist of it was that he had fallen in love with a girl of Savannah, and she was the daughter of a strong Tory. The girl, herself, was even stronger in her hatred of the patriots than was her father.

The name of this Tory was John Donald, and his daughter's name was Agnes. The man was related to Black Bob Dobson, and was in reality a member of the band, though he remained in the city most of the time, and acted as a spy for the good of the band. It was he who had sent warning to Black Bob each time a patriot force went forth to fight the guerrilla band, and the Tory was enabled to turn the tables on the patriots, as a result.

It was this man, John Donald, who had given James the block of wood, with the message on it, from Black Bob, and James had thrown it into the general's room, and had slipped into another room before Captain Monroe had looked out into the hall.

James did not know where Black Bob and his band rendezvoused, but if John Donald could be captured, he would know, and it might be possible to force him to reveal the hiding-place of the band.

James himself spoke of this, and said, pleadingly:

"You ought to be easy on me now, general, for I have betrayed my sweetheart and her father, and placed them at your mercy. That ought to earn me my freedom, I should think."

"It ought to earn you the hangman's noose," thought Dick. "You must love the girl very sincerely indeed, if you were willing to sacrifice her safety to insure your own. You are a fine specimen of a man, I must say!"

It was evident that the general and the captain thought much as Dick did, for their lips curled, and they gave the speaker a look of scorn.

"You shall not be killed, at least," was all the general said. He was on the point of having the captain summon some soldiers, with a view to having them conduct the prisoner to the guard-house, when he happened to think that John Donald or some friend of his might see James in custody, and it would result in Donald making his escape, so he said, instead.

"Captain, place this man in that room, there, and lock the door."

The captain led the prisoner into the room in question, and then came out and locked the door.

"Now, you two go at once, with a sufficient number of men to make sure work of it, and capture John Donald," the general said.

This was the order the two had expected to hear, and they were ready to obey.

"We will attend to it, sir," said Dick.

"Yes, indeed. We'll have him within the hour if he is in Savannah," said Captain Monroe.

They hastened out of the house and to the "Liberty Boys" quarters, and Dick said:

"A dozen of you boys come along—the dozen nearest the door, here; the rest remain where you are."

Twelve of the youths leaped up, and came out of the big library in a hurry.

"What's up, Dick?" was the query that was put to him.

"Never mind; come along, and you will soon find out."

They were soon out of doors, and Dick said to the captain:

"You know where this man lives, do you not?"

"Yes."

"Then you lead the way; we will follow."

The captain hastened down the street, Dick and his comrades keeping close at his heels.

Presently the captain paused at a corner, and pointed to a house standing on a lot by itself. They were now in the residence district and the buildings were more scattered.

"That is the house," he said.

The "Liberty Boys" took a look at the building, Dick with keen, searching, interested gaze, the other "Liberty Boys" with simply a look of curiosity and wonder on their faces.

"Looks to me as if there was no one at home, captain," said Dick.

"Do you know, it struck me that way," was the reply.

"I fear the birds have got wind of what was coming, and have flown."

"How could that be possible?"

"I don't know. I only know that Black Bob and his allies seem to be very keen and shrewd, and I shall not be surprised if we find the house vacated."

"Let's put the matter to the test at once."

"All right. Boys," to his comrades, "you are to surround that house, and if anybody comes out and tries to get away, you are to nab him, or her, as the case may be."

"All right, Dick."

"Now, forward, on the run."

The little party dashed forward, and had surrounded the house, in a jiffy.

If there was anyone in the house when they came in sight of it they were there yet, the members of the party were confident.

But Dick and the captain feared there was no one in.

They advanced to the front door, and knocked.

There was no response from within.

The knock was repeated.

With the same result. All was silence within.

Then they tried the door.

It was locked.

This did not prove to be much of a bar, however, for they threw themselves against the door, which was not strong, at the best, and it gave way.

They entered the house, and searched it from top to bottom.

On the table in the kitchen they found a slip of paper, pinned down with a table fork. On the paper was written:

"Dick Slater: You may be smart, and your boasted 'Liberty Boys' may be fighters, but if you will follow me into the swamp I will see to it that you come home wiser, if you come back at all, and your 'Liberty Boys' will have had it proved to them that there are others who are better fighters than they. I know you are here to try to break up the party of loyalists under Black Bob Dobson, and I know also that you have captured James Somers, and that he has betrayed us; but you will not catch us. We are far beyond your reach.

"John Donald."

After he had read this Dick handed it to the captain, who also read it.

"What do you think of that?" asked Dick.

"I think that Black Bob and all his friends are impudent and saucy," was the reply.

"You are right."

"But how did John Donald learn that James Somers had been made a prisoner, and that he had confessed, and betrayed him?"

"There is only one way he could have learned it."

"How is that?"

"One of the servants in the headquarters building carried him the news."

"Ha! Likely you are right."

"Yes, but it doesn't matter how he learned it, now, for he has escaped—he and his daughter both."

"True. But ought not the general to be warned that one of the servants is a traitor?"

"Yes."

"I will go back to headquarters and report the flight of John Donald, and tell him about the servant at the same time."

"Very good; and I will take my men and see if we can get on the trail of the two fugitives; they can have been gone but a short time."

"True."

Captain Monroe hastened back toward headquarters, and Dick rejoined his comrades.

"The birds have flown, boys," he said. "But perhaps we may get track of them. Come on; we will make the attempt at any rate."

They hastened away, going toward the West, which was the direction that the fugitives would most likely take, and occasionally Dick inquired of people whom they met if they had seen a man and a girl.

The first three people asked replied in the negative; but the fourth said he had seen a man and a girl.

"On foot or on horseback?" asked Dick.

"On horseback."

"Thank you; that settles it, fellows," this last to the youths. "It would be folly for us to follow on foot."

"Let's go back and get our horses and give chase," said Bob, eagerly.

The suggestion met with the approval of all, and they hastened back to their quarters and hastily bridled and saddled their horses, mounted, and rode away toward the west at a gallop.

The people on the streets looked at them wonderingly.

On dashed the horsemen, and presently they were in the open country.

At the first farmhouse they came to Dick called a halt, while he asked the people if they had seen a man and girl go past there on horseback.

The woman of the house said that she had seen the couple.

"How long since they went past?" asked Dick.

"About fifteen or twenty minnets, I sh'd say."

"Very well, and thank you."

Then the little party dashed onward once more.

It was now getting along toward evening.

Presently they entered some timber, where the road wound in and out, this way and that, and it was impossible to see ahead any great distance.

The "Liberty Boys" dashed onward, hoping to get sight of the fugitives at every turn in the road.

Turn after turn was made, however, and still they had not caught sight of the man and girl.

"They must have good horses," said Bob.

"Just what I was thinking, Bob," from Dick.

"Still, they had twenty minutes' start, and that is a good deal in a race of this kind."

"Yes, if their horses were even fair animals they might be able to keep out of sight of us until after dark, and then make their escape."

"Yes."

The youths kept on, however.

Presently they came to a small stream.

It was only twenty to thirty yards wide, and was easily fordable, as they could see.

They entered the water, and crossed without hesitation.

Then of a sudden, as if by magic, they found themselves surrounded by a gang of fierce-looking men, who held leveled muskets and glared at them threateningly.

CHAPTER VI.

OUT OF A TIGHT PLACE.

Instantly Dick realized that he and his comrades were in a trap.

The men surrounding them were roughly dressed, villainous-looking fellows, and he had no doubt whatever that they were members of the band known as "Dobson's Destroyers."

He sized the party up in a sweeping glance.

He judged that there must be at least one hundred of them.

A glance behind showed that more men were there, they having ridden out from among the trees at the farther side of the creek, and were now at a standstill, their horses having been brought to a stop about the middle of the stream.

It did not seem as if there was much chance for the "Liberty Boys" to escape.

The youths were ready, however, as Dick knew, and at the word from him they would make the attempt, desperate though it might seem.

All this was but an instant in passing through Dick's mind.

The next moment a horseman appeared in the road, directly in front of the youths.

He was a giant in size, and was dark-faced and forbidding in appearance.

Remembering the description he had heard given of Black Bob Dobson, by General Howe, Dick felt sure that this man was the chief of the band.

He answered to the description of Black Bob to a dot.

There was a satisfied grin on the big ruffian's face, and he said:

"Waal, ye fellers hev kinder got yer foots inter et. hain't ye?"

"I don't know that we have," replied Dick quietly.

"Who are you?"

"Oh, ye wanter know who I am?"

"I am not so particular about that. What I wish to know most is why you have stopped us in this fashion?"

"Oh, ye wanter know thet, too, do ye?"

"Yes; this is a public highway, and I think we have a right to travel over it if we wish to do so."

"Oh, but yer mistook, young feller; this hain't no public highway."

"Oh, yes it is."

"Oh, no et hain't. Et's ther king's highway."

"Oh, that's it, eh?"

"Yas. Waal, young feller, is thar ennythin' we kin do fur ye?"

"Yes; let us go on our way."

"Lemme see, whut ye wanter go on in thet direckshun fur?"

"We have business leading us that way."

"Sartainly, ye must hev; an' I think I know whut ther bizness is."

"What?"

"Yer lookin' fur er man an' er gal; hain't thet so?"

"Well, it might be so."

"Et is so. I know, an' I've come ter show ye whar they air."

"It's very kind of you."

There was sarcasm in Dick's tone, and the big fellow noted this and grinned.

"Yer welcum," he said.

"But we have decided that we don't care to find the man and the girl, after all, and with your leave we will go back."

"Yas, but he hain't got my leave yit."

The "Liberty Boy" pretended to be surprised.

"Surely you won't try to keep up here against our will?" he exclaimed.

"Sorry, but thet's jest whut I'm goin' ter do."

"Why do you wish to do this?"

"Becos I know yer, Dick Slater, an' thet ther youngsters with ye air some uv ther 'Liberty Boys,' ez they air called, ther biggest rebels in this country."

"Well, you are not any ahead of us; we know who you are."

"Oh, ye do?"

"We do."

"Who am I, then?"

"Black Bob Dobson."

The fellow grinned in a self-satisfied way.

"Thet's right; thet's who I am," he acknowledged.

"An' now ye orter be happy, young feller."

"Why so?"

"Becos ye've foun' me."

"Why should that make me happy?"

"Becos thet's whut ye cum down heer inter Georgy ter do, hain't et—ter fin' me?"

"Who told you that such was the case?"

The fellow leered.

"Thet's my bizness," he replied.

"I know who told you."

"Who?"

"John Donald."

"Who's he?" with an awkward assumption of ignorance.

"He is an esteemed relative of yours, Black Bob; you know him well enough. And you know that we were in pursuit of him and his daughter when you stopped us here."

"Haw, haw, haw!" laughed the Tory chief. "Waal, sence ye air so sartin regardin' ther matter, I don' see ez thar is enny use fur me ter try ter deny et; an' now, whut air ye goin' ter do erbout et?"

"We would like to know what you are going to do?"

"I've already tol' ye; we're goin' ter take ye ter whar ther man an' gal air—the wuns ye hev be'n chasin'."

"And you refuse to let us turn about and return the way we came?"

"I mos' sartinly do, Dick Slater! Ye cum down inter Georgy ter ketch me, an' now thet I hev turned ther tables onter ye, an hev got ye, d'ye think I'm goin' ter be fool enuff ter let ye go ergin? I guess not! No, sir-ree! Yer my pris'ner, ye an' yer men, an' yer goin' right erlong with us!"

"Where to?—your hiding-place in the swamp?" asked Dick coolly.

The black-faced man scowled.

"Who tol' ye we hed er hidin'-place in er swamp?" he growled.

The "Liberty Boy" smiled.

"That's my secret," he replied.

"Waal, ef ye think ye'll fin' ther hidin'-place uv Black Bob in er swamp, yer welcum ter think et," was the reply, "'cause w'y, ye hain't never goin' ter hev no chance ter do me hurt, ennyhow."

"Why not?"

"Hain't thet plain enuff?"

"I don't think it is."

"Waal, et orter be; hain't ye in my power now?"

"Well, you may think so."

"I know et. W'y, I've got more'n er hunderd men heer, an' thar is on'y erbout er duzzen uv ye fellers."

"Thirteen of us."

"Yas, so thar is; an' whut chance would thirteen uv ye stan' erginst er hunderd uv us fellers, an' us with our weepins out an' reddy, an' your'n not?"

"It doesn't look as though we would have much chance, that's a fact."

"No, ther on'y chance ye'd hev would be ter git killed, ef ye tried enny tricks."

"We would kill some of your men before we were killed ourselves."

"Mebby so; but thet wouldn' pay ye none; ye mought kill wun er two uv us, but we'd kill ev'ry wun uv ye."

"Perhaps."

"Thar hain't no 'prehaps' erbout et; et's er fack. An' now ther bes' thing ye kin do is ter throw yer weepins down on ther groun' an' surrender."

But Dick was determined not to surrender.

He had been keeping a close watch, and he thought that there was a chance that he and his comrades might escape.

The Tories seemed to be careless, and were not paying much attention. They held the weapons leveled, but were not keeping their eyes on the patriot youths very closely.

Doubtless they fancied that it was not necessary.

The thought farthest from their minds was that the boys might offer battle, or try to escape.

To their way of thinking it would be foolhardy in the extreme for the youths to do so.

But that was because they did not yet know the "Liberty Boys."

Had they known them better they would have kept a closer watch, and been more careful.

They were soon to be taught a lesson.

They were on the eve of becoming better acquainted with the "Liberty Boys" and their methods of doing business.

Dick had already given his comrades instructions regarding what was to be done. He did this by means of secret signals, which were conveyed to his comrades in certain gestures which he from time to time made as he was conversing with Black Bob. Indeed, it was to give him time to make these signals that he kept the Tory chief talking.

Now all was arranged. His comrades knew just what was expected of them, and were ready for business whenever he said the word.

Their nerves were tense as steel, and the youths only awaited the signal when they would give the Tories a surprise.

So now, when Black Bob had called upon them to surrender, the time for action had come.

So, instead of throwing their weapons down on the ground, as ordered to do, the youths suddenly plucked their pistols out of their belts, and sticking the spurs into the flanks of their horses, dashed forward like a hurricane.

They fired to the right and left and straight ahead as they went, and yelled like wild Indians.

It was done so quickly and came so unexpectedly that the Tories were stricken dumb with amazement.

A number of the ruffians fell to the ground, dead or wounded, too, for the "Liberty Boys" were good shots under any and all circumstances, and they never wasted a shot.

The result of the sudden move was success.

The Tories were so astonished that they were rendered incapable of doing anything until the youths were almost out of range. Then they fired some scattering shots, but they did not take aim, and the bullets went wild.

Before they could fire a second volley the youths were out of sight around a bend in the road.

CHAPTER VII.

DICK IS PUZZLED.

If ever there was an angry man it was Black Bob, when he realized that his intended victims had made their escape.

In the rush he had been jostled, and his horse had shied and thrown him, but beyond a severe shaking up he had received no injury.

One bullet had whistled past his ear, and he realized that it had been intended to go through his head, but he did not think much about it. There were too many other things to think of.

Seven of his men were down, three dead and four wounded, two of them seriously.

They were groaning in a terrible manner, and taken all in all the Tories were in a bad way.

Black Bob realized that it would do no good to try to give chase to the fugitives, for not more than a dozen of his men were mounted, and their horses were not of the best, while he was judge enough of animals to know the "Liberty Boys" possessed good mounts.

"Et hain't no use ter try ter ketch ther cusses now, boys," Black Bob said. "We'll hev ter giv' et up an' acknowledge thet fur wunst we air beat."

The men agreed that such was the case, but they were an angry and sullen lot while they buried their three dead comrades.

Then they lifted up the wounded men, and turning aside from the road, entered the timber and made their way through it, keeping alongside the creek.

It was now growing dark, but the Tories seemed to know their way perfectly. They moved onward without hesitation.

The "Liberty Boys" were delighted at the success of their sudden dash for liberty.

It succeeded even better than they had expected.

At the best, they expected that some of their number would be wounded, and that it might be possible that one or more would be killed, but not one was injured.

Not a bullet from the pistols of the Tories had taken effect.

The moment they were out of sight around the first bend in the road Dick called a halt.

"I am going to play the spy, and see if I can track those fellows to their hiding-place," he said. "They will not try to follow us, for they have only a few horses. You boys lead my horse, and make your way by another road back to Savannah. I will be back in the city as soon as I have located the hiding-place of the Tories."

The youths did not argue the matter. They were accustomed to obeying orders, without any words, and they rode onward, after a low-spoken "Good-by, and good luck," and Dick plunged into the timber at the side of the road and made his way slowly and cautiously back toward where the Tories were.

He knew they would still be there.

He was sure that himself and comrades had killed two or three, and severely wounded others, and that it would be some little time before the Tories would be ready to leave the spot where the encounter had taken place.

He was soon where he could see what was going on.

Some of the ruffians were digging a grave, and Dick

crawled up close enough to hear them talking. He heard them say that three of their comrades had been killed and four wounded.

"Not so bad!" thought Dick. "I guess that the next time the Tory gang meets us they will be more careful."

He remained where he was, watching, until the work of burying the dead had been accomplished, and then, when the wounded men were lifted and the entire party of one hundred men left the road and started through the timber, Dick followed.

"I think this is as good a chance as I will have in some time," he told himself. "Those scoundrels will likely go straight to their hiding-place, for they will wish to get the wounded men to a place where they can be taken care of, and all I will have to do is to keep in sight of them."

Presently it grew dark, and then Dick worked his way forward until he was close up to the party of guerrillas.

"I can't see them if they are fifty yards ahead of me," he told himself; "and I might lose them, so I must keep close up to them, and trust to my hearing."

He thought this would be an easy way to trail the Tories. And so it proved.

The wounded men kept up an almost continuous groaning, and this was the best kind of a guide.

Presently Dick found that he was making his way along a well-beaten trail, which seemed to lead up through the hills.

He had noticed for some time that the way was ascending, and he wondered at the Tories going in this direction.

He had understood that they had their rendezvous in a swamp, and here they were making for the high ground.

The youth began to suspect that the tale that they rendezvoused in a swamp had been told by the Tories themselves, on purpose to throw any enemies off the scent, in case an attempt was made to capture them, or find their hiding-place.

"Well, they won't throw me off the trail," the youth told himself. "They cannot move rapidly and carry the wounded men, and they furnish me with a splendid guide by their groans."

The "Liberty Boy" became convinced finally that they were following a sort of country lane, which was doubtless used more or less by the settlers of the vicinity.

At one point he fancied he saw a light up the side of a hill, two hundred yards or more distant.

"Likely that is where a settler lives," he thought. "Perhaps he is a member of this gang, however."

Suddenly, a few minutes later, Dick heard the trampling of many feet on boards.

He was amazed, and puzzled as well, at first.

He could not think what occasioned the sound.

Then the thought flashed into his mind:

"A bridge! Of course that's it. They are crossing a wooden bridge over some little hillside stream or other."

The youth continued onward, and presently, when he was, as he judged, within twenty yards of the bridge, the sound was heard no more.

"They have all crossed," thought Dick. "And now I will follow. But I must be careful, and not make any noise. I will tip-toe across."

He felt his way along until he came to the bridge, and then he walked across it on tip-toes, and did not make any noise that could have been heard any distance at all.

When he had got across he listened, but did not hear the footsteps of the Tories on in advance of him. Neither did he hear the groans of the wounded men.

"I have fooled away so much time being careful that they have got quite a ways ahead of me," thought Dick. "I must hurry and get up with them, for I wouldn't lose them for anything. This is my chance to find out their hiding-place."

He increased his pace, and hastened onward.

Presently he paused and listened.

He heard nothing—no footsteps, no groans.

"That is strange," thought Dick. "I would not have thought they could have gotten so far ahead of me as that."

He increased his pace till he was almost running.

He kept this up for a minute, at least, and then again paused and listened.

Still he heard nothing.

There was no sound of footsteps; not a groan broke upon his hearing.

The youth stood still, and pondered.

It was a strange affair.

He was greatly puzzled.

What had become of the party of guerrillas?

The "Liberty Boy" was now almost certain that it was not in front of him. Then where was it?

That was the question, and a hard one to answer.

Dick would not have believed that the party, bearing the wounded men, who were groaning with pain, could have given him the slip, but it looked now as if they had done so.

And, too, it had been done without any particular effort, for the youth did not believe that the Tories knew they were being followed.

"Well, I don't know what to think of it," the youth said to himself. "I'll try one more run onward up this road, and then if I can hear nothing of them I shall be absolutely certain they did not come in this direction."

Again he went onward, and he moved as rapidly as he could, in the darkness, and over a road that was strange to him.

When he had gone a third of a mile, or such matter, he again stopped and listened intently.

All silence.

"They have given me the slip!" said Dick to himself, a feeling of chagrin taking hold upon him. "Now where can they have done that? Let me see, where did I last hear the sound of their footsteps, and the groans?"

He pondered a few moments, and then the thought came to him that the last he had heard was the sound of the footsteps on the bridge that he had crossed a mile or so back.

"Did I hear their footsteps after they crossed the bridge?" he asked himself.

After a moment's thought he decided that he had not done so.

"I don't believe I heard either the footsteps or the groans after they crossed the bridge," he told himself.

This having been decided, his course was clear.

"Back to the bridge I go!" he said. "But I very much fear I shall be too late. I am afraid I have lost the trail."

He was only a few minutes in reaching the bridge.

As soon as his feet struck on the boards he paused, and stood perfectly still.

He listened intently, in the hope that he might hear some sound that would guide him.

He was disappointed.

Not a sound could he hear.

After waiting a little while, Dick walked off the bridge, and made his way down to the edge of the little stream that the bridge crossed.

He said to himself that it must be a very small stream, a mere rivulet, for he could just hear the tinkle of the water, and that was all.

It was now so dark that Dick could not see, to make investigations, and he was puzzled regarding what should be his course.

It would be foolish to try to find the trail of the Tories in the darkness; but he felt that in broad daylight he might be able to follow it, for there were a number of horses, and their tracks could be easily followed if the ground was not too hard.

"I think I will wait till morning, and then try to follow the Tories' trail," the youth said to himself. "But where shall I stay? I hate to stay out here in the open, for I haven't even my blanket, and no food at all, and in the morning I will be hungry."

Then he thought of the light he had seen up the side of the hill as he had come along the road.

"That was only a little ways back," he said to himself. "I'll just go to that house and see if they will keep me over night."

He walked back along the road a distance of perhaps two hundred yards, and then caught sight of the light.

Turning aside he began climbing up the hillside.

He soon found a path, which he followed, and it led him to the door of a good-sized log cabin.

The youth paused and looked at the cabin for a few moments, and hesitated.

He realized that he would be taking considerable risk in entering, for the house might be the abode of a Tory, who might even be a member of Black Bob's band.

On the other hand it might be the home of a patriot. It was simply a guess which.

There was only one way to test the matter, and that was by entering and finding out.

The "Liberty Boy" was brave, and he was not disposed to let the fear that an enemy might be in the cabin be the

cause of his remaining out all night. He would put the matter to the test, and take his chances.

He walked quickly forward and knocked on the door.

"Now I will soon know about the matter," he said to himself.

CHAPTER VIII.

A MYSTERIOUS VISITOR.

There was the sound of footsteps within.

Then Dick heard the noise made by the work of removing a bar from across the door.

"Is that you, father?" called out a voice, which was sweet and musical, and which the youth knew at once belonged to a girl.

"No, miss," was Dick's reply. "I am a stranger, who wishes to get lodgings for the night."

There were a few moments of silence, and then the voice asked:

"Are you alone?"

"Yes," was Dick's answer.

"You are sure there is not more than the one?"

"Only the one, miss. Why, are you alone and afraid?"

"Yes, that is the truth of the matter, sir," was the frank reply. "Father went to Savannah this afternoon, and is likely to be back at any moment, however."

"Well, don't open the door, if you have any fears, miss," said Dick. "But I give you my word of honor as a man that you run no risks in opening the door. I am an honest and honorable man, and would not take advantage of anyone, much less a helpless young woman. Still, if you feel afraid to risk it, don't do it."

"I will take the risk," was the reply, after a moment. "I like the sound of your voice. It sounds like that of an honest man."

"And you will find it to be the voice of an honest man, miss."

The next moment the door opened, and Dick saw a beautiful maiden of perhaps sixteen years standing in the doorway, with a lighted candle in her hand.

She looked slightly pale, and eyed him eagerly and searchingly, as well as somewhat fearfully at first; then she drew a long breath of relief, and stepping aside, motioned the youth to enter.

"I was sure I could not be mistaken," the girl said, a tone of relief in her voice. "The voice sounded good, and now I know, since having seen your face, that you are not one who would harm an unprotected girl."

"On the contrary, miss, I would unhesitatingly risk my life in your protection," was the quiet, earnest reply.

"I believe you, sir."

Then the girl closed and barred the door, and motioning to a seat in front of the big fireplace, in which a good fire was blazing, said:

"Sit down, sir."

The "Liberty Boy" did so.

The girl also seated herself, and looked at Dick with undisguised interest, though it was plain that she was modest and good, as well as beautiful.

"My name is Jennie Warren, sir," she said, timidly, after a few moments. "Do you mind telling me your name?"

The youth looked at the girl sharply.

"I wonder whether her father is a patriot or a Tory?" he asked himself. "If he is a patriot, and she is one also, then I would have no reason for giving a fictitious name. Let's see; I'll ask her, and I think I can tell whether or not she is telling the truth when she answers."

"What is your father—patriot or Tory, Miss Jennie, if it is a fair question?" asked Dick.

The girl hesitated.

She looked at Dick searchingly.

"You are from the North, aren't you?" she asked presently.

"Yes, and you ought by rights to be from New England yourself, Miss Jennie," with a smile. "You have their way of doing when asked a question they don't care to answer."

"How do you mean?"

"Instead of answering you ask a question."

"Oh."

"You may safely answer my question, Miss Jennie; you may be sure I shall treat you with every consideration, no matter what your answer may be."

"Then I will tell you truly," the girl said impulsively.

"My father is a patriot."

"Good. I am glad to hear that."

"Are you, indeed?" her face lighting up.

"Yes. I, too, am a patriot."

"I am glad to hear you say that, sir."

"And now I shall not hesitate to tell you my name. It is Dick Slater."

"What!—Dick Slater, you say?"

The girl's voice was eager, and she looked excited.

"Yes."

"I have heard of you, many times, Mr. Slater."

"Away down here in Georgia?"

"Yes; father has talked of you many times, and I have heard him say more than once that he wished you and your 'Liberty Boys' would come down here in this part of the country."

"Why did he wish that?"

"He said he believed that you would be able to break up Black Bob Dobson's band of outlaws."

"Well, he has his wish then; for we are here, and we are going to do our best to break up the band you speak of."

"I am so glad."

"That is what I am doing, away out here, to-night, Miss Jennie."

"It is?"

"Yes," and then Dick told of how he had followed the party of guerrillas along the road, and had lost all traces of them at a point not far from where they were at that very moment.

"Well, well!" the girl said, musingly. "It is strange how you came to lose track of Black Bob's party in that fashion."

"So it is. I cannot understand it, Miss Jennie."

"Please drop the 'Miss' off, Mr. Slater, and call me simply 'Jennie,' will you not?" the girl asked.

"If you will call me 'Dick.'"

The girl blushed slightly, and then said:

"Very well, Dick."

The "Liberty Boy" started to say something, and then stopped and turned his head and assumed a listening attitude.

"What is it?" the girl asked, a peculiar look on her face.

"I thought I heard the murmur of voices."

"You think so?" the girl asked.

"Yes, ah, there it is again. Somebody is talking; perhaps your father has come, and brought someone with him. Ah, I never thought; it must be your mother, though you did not say anything about her."

"My mother has been dead many years," was the low, sad reply.

"Then your father has brought someone home with him."

The youth rose and walked to the door, took down the bar, and pulling the door open, looked out.

He could neither see nor hear anyone outside.

"That is strange," he said to the girl, who had risen and followed him to the door.

"Father has not come yet," said Jennie.

"No, but there must be somebody here, near at hand."

The youth stepped outside, and walked as nearly around the cabin as he could. He could not go clear around, for he found that the back of the house was right against the steep side of the hill.

When he had moved all about, and had seen and heard nothing of anyone, he re-entered the house, and closed and barred the door and again settled himself in front of the fireplace.

He had scarcely exchanged a dozen words with the girl, before he gave utterance to a warning "Sh!" and again assumed a listening attitude.

The girl, too, was listening.

"I am sure I heard the murmur of voices then," said Dick, after a moment or two. "Didn't you hear it, Jennie?"

"Yes; I heard it, Dick."

"Somebody must be outside! I'll go and make another tour of investigation."

He started to rise, but the girl laid her hand on his arm and detained him.

"It will do no good," she said. "Sit still."

"What do you mean?" in surprise.

The youth hardly knew what to think. He could not understand the action of the girl.

"I will tell you what I mean, Dick. Father and I have heard that sound many, many times, and like you, we have searched for somebody, only we have done it a score or more times, while you have done it but the once."

"You don't mean to tell me that you have heard the murmur of the voices many times, and have again and again looked for the speakers without finding them, Jennie?"

The youth was greatly surprised.

"Yes, Dick; and we have come to the conclusion at last that it is not the murmur of human voices at all, but the sigh of the wind down the chimney."

Dick shook his head, slowly and doubtfully.

"That may be the case," he said. "But I would have wagered anything that what I heard was the murmur of human voices."

"So would father and I have done so at first; but when we heard it again and again, night after night, for weeks upon weeks, we decided that we must be mistaken."

"You have heard it for many weeks then?"

"Yes, indeed."

"For about how many, at a rough guess?"

"Oh, say ten or twelve weeks."

"And do you hear the murmuring sound only at night?"

"Only at night, Dick; but that is only natural, I suppose, as there are no disturbing noises in the night time, and that is about the only time we are ever sitting here, doing nothing."

"Yes, true, Miss Jennie."

The youth spoke in an abstracted manner, as if his thoughts were elsewhere.

Indeed, this was the case.

He had felt confident that the murmuring sound he had heard was that of human voices, and he was pondering the matter.

If such really was the case, where did the voices come from?

Where were the persons who were doing the talking?

This was a hard question to answer.

Suddenly Dick started, and became on the alert.

"There it is again!" he half whispered. "That is a very mysterious thing, Jennie, and I am going to find out what caused the murmuring sound, or know the reason why!"

Leaving his seat he dropped upon one knee, right beside the fire-place, and held his ear in that direction, and listened long and intently, while Jennie watched him eagerly.

CHAPTER IX.

DICK MAKES ANOTHER DISCOVERY.

Presently he rose and stood looking into the fire-place with an abstracted air.

"Let me see," he said presently. "This house is built right up against the side of the hill, isn't it?"

"Yes," was the reply. "Father says he did that in order to be able to cut the chimney for the fire-place right out of the hillside, which he says was much easier than to build one."

"I see. Well, excuse me a few minutes, Jennie, and I will go out and make another tour of observation."

"Certainly."

The youth unbarred and opened the door and passed out into the night.

He went around to where the house touched the hillside, and made an observation, but could discover nothing.

Then he walked away until he came to a point where he could climb up the side of the hill.

Then he made his way upward slowly and cautiously and gradually worked his way across till he was directly above the chimney of the house—or rather, the cut in the hillside which answered for a chimney.

He found himself on a sort of ledge, and by leaning over he could see down into the chimney. He could even see the fire burning on the hearth.

"Hello, down there, Jennie!" he called out, in only a moderate tone of voice.

There was no response from below, and Dick knew the girl had not heard him. Had she done so she would undoubtedly have come out of the house and asked him what he wanted.

He tried it again, with the same result.

"That settles that part of it," he said to himself. "The strange voices did not come from anywhere above, here, or Jennie would have heard me."

He made his way back down, and re-entered the cabin.

"Did you discover anything, Dick?" the girl asked, eagerly.

"No, Miss Jennie."

I didn't think you would. Father and I have tried it too often, and always without success."

"Well, I don't understand it; it seems very strange."

"I guess you will have to come to the same conclusion that father and I have come to, Dick."

"That it is the murmuring of the wind?"

"Yes."

The "Liberty Boy" shook his head.

"It may be the murmur of the wind," he said. "But if so it is the strangest sound I ever heard wind make."

The murmuring sound was not heard again, and half an hour later Mr. Warren got home from Savannah.

He did not come in the house until after he had unhitched and attended to his horse; and then he entered, carrying some packages that he had purchased in the city.

He was astonished when he saw a stranger there, but when Jennie introduced Dick, and told how he happened to be there, Mr. Warren was delighted, and shook the youth's hand heartily.

"I heard about you and your 'Liberty Boys' this after-

noon while in Savannah, Mr. Slater," he said. "I heard that you had gone in pursuit of a Tory and his daughter in who had fled from the city."

"Yes, we chased them quite a distance, sir."

"And did not catch them?"

"No," and then Dick told the story of the encounter with Black Bob's band, and how he had been following the Tories, but had lost the trail.

"But I am confident I can find it in the morning," he said. "So many men, and with ten or a dozen horses, could not well help leaving a plain trail."

"So I think, Mr. Slater."

Jennie was busy getting her father's supper, and although Dick had told her that he had eaten all he cared to—which was the case, he having finished some bread and meat he had brought along, having taken it from the saddle-bags before parting from the "Liberty Boys"—and now told Mr. Warren the same thing, they both insisted that he should eat some, and he sat up to the table with them and ate as much as he could.

The three remained up an hour afterward, and then Dick was shown to a room in the loft, where was a comfortable cot, and he was soon sound asleep.

After breakfast next morning he set out to see if he could find the trail of Black Bob and his gang. Fearing that he might not get back to see the two again Dick bade them good-by, but promised to call if he should find himself in that neighborhood at any time.

He went straight down to the bridge, and took a survey of the ground.

He saw that the stream that flowed under the bridge was a mere rivulet as he had thought the night before, but the gully through which it flowed was at least twenty feet wide, and twelve feet deep, and this it was that had necessitated the bridge.

The "Liberty Boy" stepped to the farther side of the bridge, and made an examination of the ground beyond.

He soon made a discovery.

Black Bob and his band had turned aside from the road immediately after crossing the bridge, and had gone down the slope, and to the bed of the little stream.

This Dick discovered by following the trail left behind by the feet of the men and hoofs of the horses.

Here the bottom of the ravine was one thick mass of moss, and for a few moments the youth was at fault.

The moss had straightened up during the night, and it was hard to say which way the party had gone.

"Of course, there can be little doubt regarding the direction they have gone, however," thought Dick. "They have followed this little stream down to where it doubtless empties into some lake, or something of that kind, likely within the limits of the swamp."

The youth got down on his hands and knees, and parting the moss, looked for the tracks of the horses' hoofs in the damp earth underneath.

He easily found the tracks.

He looked at the tracks for some moments in silence, and then said, half aloud:

"Well, here is a go! I wonder what that means?"

The hoof-marks, instead of pointing downstream, toward where Dick supposed was a swamp, pointed upstream, toward the bridge—the youth was perhaps twenty yards below the end of the bridge.

"I don't understand that," Dick said to himself. "Surely they didn't go in that direction. Where could they go to?"

He made another examination, however, and this time he traced the hoofprints toward the end of the bridge, and also he found the imprints of many feet, which showed that the men had gone in the same direction.

The "Liberty Boy" followed the trail till he stood underneath the end of the bridge, and then he paused, scratched his head, and looked wonderingly ahead.

He could not understand what it meant.

"Did they know they were followed last night, and did they come down here, under the bridge, and stay till I had passed onward?"

He asked himself this question, but when he had made another careful examination he found that, while the footsteps led under the bridge, they did not lead out from under it!

There could be no doubt regarding this, for Dick had made a careful and thorough examination.

The band of Tories under Black Bob had come in underneath the bridge the night before, and had not come back out again; that Dick was confident of. But where had they gone?

He stared through under the bridge at the hillside, which showed there.

The youth knew that the little stream came from the hillside, for it did not show above the bridge, and the thought came to him that the Tory band could only have gone where the rivulet led.

From where he stood, however, there did not seem to be room to permit the passage of a horse; but then there were bushes growing there, and they might hide enough of the entrance to make it seem much smaller than it really was.

The "Liberty Boy" was eager and excited now.

He believed he was hot on the trail of the enemy.

His idea was that Black Bob and his band were not far away.

"There must be a gigantic cavern in the face of the hill," he thought, "and they have made it their rendezvous, and by giving out that they rendezvoused in the swamps, they have been enabled to have a hiding-place easily accessible, and from which they can sally at any moment, and get back to quickly and easily."

The youth made up his mind to reconnoiter.

He realized that it would be dangerous work to do this, but the thought of danger never had any deterring effect on Dick Slater.

He moved slowly and cautiously forward, underneath the bridge.

The moss muffled the sound made by his footsteps, and he could scarcely hear the sound himself, so was not afraid anyone else might hear it.

When he came to the bushes at the farther end he paused and took an observation.

He quickly saw that the footprints of the men and horses led around to the left of the largest bush, which grew in the center.

The "Liberty Boy" moved around to the left of the big bush, and brushing between it and a smaller one at the left, he found himself standing in front of a narrow opening in the hillside.

The opening was perhaps five feet wide, by six feet high, and was so crooked that it was impossible to see more than a few yards ahead.

The youth advanced, slowly and cautiously.

He was determined to see the place where the Tory band stayed before going back.

He deemed this to be necessary, as otherwise he could not be sure it was a permanent rendezvous, and in that case, if he were to return to Savannah and bring his "Liberty Boys" back with him, it might be only to find the birds had flown. If it was only a temporary encampment, then the Tories would probably go to their headquarters some time that day, and he would wish to be present to follow them.

Onward, slowly and cautiously, Dick moved.

He followed the crookings and windings of the passage, and noted that at some points the little stream took up at least half the width of the passage, leaving only a narrow footpath alongside it for the use of the Tories and horses.

The farther he went the darker it grew, for there was not much chance for the light to penetrate into the winding passage, and soon he was practically feeling his way along.

It was while thus engaged that he turned a short bend in the passage, and as if by magic came into a broad glare of light.

He was now in a large cavern, in the center of which was a huge fire, around which were gathered a large number of rough-looking men.

This much Dick saw, his eyes being somewhat dazzled by the bright light, and then he felt himself seized by strong hands.

CHAPTER X.

THE TORY BAND'S RENDEZVOUS.

Dick realized that he had made a mistake.

But it was too late to do anything now save make an attempt to get away.

This was a forlorn hope, but he went to work with will.

He fought desperately.

He gave his enemies all they could do for a few moments.

Three or four had hold of him, however, and as they were all strong, husky fellows he could not shake them off.

And even had he done so it would have been useless, for in an instant, almost, they were surrounded by fifty more of the ruffians, among whom was Black Bob himself.

"Stop fightin', ye fool!" he cried. "Ye air ketched, so what's ther use uv cuttin' up? Ye kain't git erway, no how ye kin fix et."

The youth saw that this was the truth, and ceased struggling.

"All right," he said. "I guess you are right."

"Uv course I am; now bring 'im over heer ter ther fire boys; but tie his han's furst, fur he's er bad man, ye bet; an' take his weepins erway frum 'im."

They led Dick to the fire, and tied his hands together behind his back, after which they took his weapons away from him, and forced him to sit down on a blanket spread before the blaze.

"Waal, yer purty smart, Dick Slater, but I guess ye ruther overdone ther thing this time, didn' ye!" Black Bob said, with a hideous grin.

"I was a bit careless, I must admit," was Dick's calm reply.

"Yas, an' yer keerlessness'll cost ye yer life."

"Oh, I don't know about that."

"Ye don't, hey?"

"No."

"Waal, I do."

"You won't dare harm me."

"We won't?"

"No."

"Waal, then, thar's er big disapp'intment in store fur ye, Dick Slater."

"There is?"

"Yas, fur ye'll never leeve this heer cavern erlive!"

The ruffian's tone was fierce, and the look on his face, too, was sufficient to show that he meant what he said.

The "Liberty Boy" realized this, for he was a good judge of human nature, and he saw the man before him was a demon who would hesitate at no crime, but he did not let on. He was determined that the fellow should not have the satisfaction of seeing that he had made an impression.

"You think I will never leave this place alive?" remarked Dick.

"I know et."

The tone was grim and confident.

"Well, let me tell you something," said Dick.

"Go erhead."

"If you kill me—which you have the power to do, I will

admit, you will by so doing seal the doom of yourself and each and every one of your men."

"Haw, haw, haw!" laughed Black Bob. "Say, ye don' expeck me ter berleeve thet, do ye?"

"You will be wise if you do believe it, for it is the truth."

"Bosh! How c'u'd thet be?"

"I will tell you. I am, as you know, the captain of the company of young men known as 'The Liberty Boys of '76.'"

"Yas, I know thet; Donald, thar, tole me thet."

The "Liberty Boy" glanced across to the opposite side of the fire, and saw a man and a girl sitting there, and he knew at once that they were John Donald and his daughter Agnes, whom he and his comrades had chased the afternoon before.

The girl was not bad-looking, while not at all beautiful, and there was a sad look on her face.

"Well," went on Dick, "those 'Liberty Boys' think the world and all of me, and if anything should happen to me they would have revenge. Do you see?"

"But they wouldn't know whut hed bercome uv ye."

"Oh, yes, they will know. They know I followed you last night, and if I don't come back to Savannah within a couple of days they will set out in search of you and your band, and when they find you I pity you, that's all!"

"Yas, but they won't be able to fin' us."

"Yes, they will; they'll find you, all right."

"Waal, let 'em; we hev twicet ez menny men ez ye hev, an' kin lick 'em, an' not ha'f try."

"You may think so, but you will find your mistake when you try it. Remember yesterday evening, when a dozen of us easily got away from a hundred of you fellows."

A dark look came over Black Bob's face.

"Ye hain't doin' yerself no good by bringin' thet back ter my min'," he growled. "Ye killed three uv my boys, an' woonded four more, an' I'm goin' ter hev revenge fur thet."

"You were to blame yourselves; you oughtn't to blame us for what we did. Wouldn't you have done the same if you had been in our place?"

"Thet don' make no difference; ye killed three uv my boys, an' ye hev gotter pay fur et."

"Very good; but mind what I tell you. You will be sorry for it if you injure me, for it will mean the utter extermination of your band."

Black Bob looked at Dick for awhile in silence, and seemed to be turning something over in his mind. Finally he said:

"I hev heerd et said ez how ye air allers er man uv yer word, Dick Slater."

"I think I can truthfully say that such is the case," was the reply.

"Waal, I'll tell ye whut I'll do. Ef ye'll giv' me yer word uv honor ez er man thet ye'll go back out uv these parts, an' not try ter break up my ban', I'll let ye go free. Whut d'ye say?"

The "Liberty Boy" gave the ruffian a look of scorn.

"What a cowardly scoundrel he is, after all!" thought the youth. "But I might have known it, for all such fellows are cowards at heart. It is plain that he fears my 'Liberty Boys,' and I don't think he will dare put me to death. He will be afraid that what I said about my boys may turn out to be true." Aloud he said:

"I say 'No!' I will make no such promise."

"Then ye air determined ter go ahead, an' try ter break my ban' up?"

"I am!"

"All right; then we'll see ter et thet ye don' he'p do et. We'll put an end ter ye, ye kin bet."

"If you will take my advice, you will do nothing of the kind, Black Bob."

"Bah! I hain't erfeerd uv yer 'Liberty Boys.'"

But Dick thought differently. He believed that Black Bob was very much afraid of the "Liberty Boys."

The Tory chief arose and walked away, however, and so the conversation ceased.

Black Bob talked with a number of the men, and presently a party of one hundred filed out of the cavern and disappeared.

There were about the same number still remaining; so the "Liberty Boy" realized that the number of men said to be under the command of Black Bob had not been exaggerated; there were at least two hundred.

The day passed very slowly to Dick. At noon he was given his dinner, when the rest were eating theirs, so he did not suffer so far as hunger was concerned.

The youth caught Agnes Donald looking at him in a peculiar manner several times that afternoon, and he was puzzled to interpret the look. He could not decide whether it was one of anger toward him, of pity, or of friendliness.

Evening came, and supper was cooked over the big fire in the middle of the cavern, and again Dick was given food, which he ate with a relish, for he wished to husband his strength.

He had not given up hope of making his escape; not by any means.

He was determined to make an escape that night, if such a thing was possible.

Of course, he realized that it would be a difficult matter, but he had accomplished as difficult things before, he was sure.

The party that had gone forth in the forenoon came back now, and the members cooked and ate their supper. Black Bob had accompanied them, and his face was dark and forbidding as ever.

"Ye hed better make ther prommus ter me thet I spoke erbout, this mornin'," he said to Dick, when he had finished his supper.

The youth shook his head.

"I could not think of doing that," he said, promptly and firmly.

"Ye'll wush't ye hed, ef ye don'."

"I will risk it."

"D'ye know whut thet meens?"

"No."

"Et meens thet ye'll die ter-morrer, 'nless ye change yer min'!"

"Why are you going to wait till to-morrow?"

"Ter giv' ye er chance ter change yer min'."

"You are not eager for trouble with my 'Liberty Boys,' I see," said Dick with a smile. "And I must say that in that you show considerable wisdom."

"Waal, et hain't bercause I'm erfraid uv 'em."

"No? Why then?"

"Bercause I know thet in lickin' yer 'Liberty Boys' I'll be boun' ter lose sum uv my boys, an' I don' want do thet."

"Some of them, eh?" with a smile.

"Yas."

"Well, I should say that you will lose some of them! You will lose practically all of them, Black Bob."

"Bosh! I hain't erfeerd uv thet."

"You will be before you get through with this affair."

"Waal, ye won't live ter see et, Dick Slater!" the ruffian hissed, "fur ef ye don' make ther prommus ter me in ther mornin', I shell stan' ye up at one side uv ther cavern, an' ther boys'll fill ye full uv bullets!"

The ruffian strode away, and Dick was left alone to think the matter over.

His hands and feet both were bound now, and he was placed on a blanket, with his back to the wall.

He lay there, thinking fast, and wondering how he was to get out of the dangerous situation in which he found himself, when of a sudden he was startled to hear the murmur of voices.

The persons who were speaking were not in the cavern, he was sure, for the sound seemed to come from the wall near which he was lying.

The "Liberty Boy" rolled over in a careless manner, as if to get greater ease of position, and then he pressed his ear against the wall.

He had not been mistaken. The murmur of voices came to his hearing, and the sound seemed to come from out the wall.

CHAPTER XI.

ANOTHER DISCOVERY.

Like a flash the explanation of the phenomenon came to Dick.

He remembered the peculiar incident of the night before, when he had been in the home of the Warrens; remembered how he had heard the murmur of voices, and yet could not learn where the sound came from.

He understood it all now, however. He knew that the sound had come from this cavern in which he now lay, a prisoner. And the voices which he now heard must come from the cabin of the Warrens.

The "Liberty Boy" was sure he was right, and he knew, now, he was confident, why the sound seemed to come down the chimney the night before. Mr. Warren, when he made the cut in the face of the hill, to take the place of a chimney, had come very near cutting through into the cavern in the hill. Dick's idea was that the wall of earth between could not be more than two or three feet in thickness.

He knew that if this were true the wall would be warm, and he lifted his head as high as possible, and placed his cheek against the wall.

His theory was proved.

The wall was warm!

"That is it!" said Dick to himself. "I have solved the mystery of the murmuring voices."

This gave him food for thought, and he was not long in deciding that if he could escape this knowledge would be of benefit to him.

The winding and narrow passage which led to the cavern, the way Dick had entered, and the way the guerrillas always entered—for it was the only way to come in—could be held against an invading force easily, and it would be the height of folly to try to force an entrance in that direction. The creek, or little rivulet, rather, furnished all the water that was needed, and there was provisions enough to last an army three or four months piled up at one side of the cavern, so the Tories could withstand a siege of any length. Indeed, they could remain in the cavern throughout an entire winter, if it was made necessary, and Dick knew this was the reason the cavern had been made their headquarters. The scoundrels felt safe even if an army was to get after them.

But with the knowledge of the thin wall of earth that lay between the cabin of Mr. Warren and the cavern, Dick felt that he held the key to the situation in his hands. If he could get free, and find his "Liberty Boys," they could make a feint of attacking by way of the passage, and then knock the wall down between the cabin and the cavern and take the Tories by surprise, from the rear, and quickly get the better of them.

It was a glorious plan, and Dick's heart swelled as he thought of how he would like to be able to put it through to a successful issue.

"If I can only succeed in making my escape," he thought, "all will be well, for I will have knowledge that will place the band of Black Bob Dobson at our mercy."

The youth began working, slowly and cautiously, at the rope which bound his arms.

If he could get his hands free, then he might succeed in untying the rope that bound his legs later in the night, when the majority of the Tories were asleep, and then he would stand a chance of escaping.

He would have to be very careful, he knew, for the Tories were thick on all sides of him, excepting the side where the wall was.

He kept at work, intermittently, for there were times when he would see the eyes of some of the men turned upon him. In many of those glances he read bitter hatred, and

he realized that if Black Bob were to stand him up against the wall, and call upon his men to fill him full of bullets, they would jump at the chance.

"They are a bad lot, there is no doubt," the youth said to himself. "Well, I must make my escape. It would be terrible to lose my life to such scoundrels as they are. When I die, if I die I must while the war is in progress, I hope it will be on the field of battle, with my face to the enemy, and when I fall I hope my toes will point upward."

Occasionally Dick heard the murmuring of the voices, and he had no doubt that the persons talking were Mr. Warren and Jennie.

"They little suspect that I am lying within a dozen feet of them," thought Dick. "Wouldn't they be surprised if they knew that such was the case!"

There was no doubt regarding this.

Indeed, Dick was right about the matter of the identity of the speakers, whose voices he heard. Mr. Warren and Jennie were at that very moment sitting in front of the fireplace, talking, and they were speaking of Dick Slater. They were wondering if he had got on the trail of the Tory band.

"I think he must have done so," said Jennie.

"Why do you think so?" her father asked.

"Because if he had failed I think he would have come back here."

The man nodded.

"I judge that you are right," he agreed. "Well, I hope that he did succeed in tracking the scoundrels down, and that he and his 'Liberty Boys' will be able to exterminate the band, or at least scatter it to the four winds."

They will do it if it is possible for it to be done, father, I am sure."

"I think so too. That young man, Dick Slater, impressed me as being a brave and determined youth."

"Yes, and you know, father, that he has made a wonderful reputation for himself, and that his 'Liberty Boys' are noted, also, for their bravery and daring."

So I do know, Jennie. Well, it will be a great thing for the patriots of this part of Georgia if Dick Slater and his men can scatter the band of Black Bob, and put a stop to its robbing, pillaging, and terrible work in general."

"Yes, father. It will be a great day for the cause of liberty, for those terrible men represent King George, and are ready to render assistance to the British whenever called upon to do so."

"So they do; and they confine their work of pillage and murder to the patriot families."

"Yes, indeed."

The "Liberty Boy," lying flat upon his back in the cavern, not more than a dozen feet from Mr. Warren and Jennie, could hear the murmur of their voices, but of course could not distinguish what was said, and did not know that he was the subject of conversation.

He kept working away at the rope which bound his hands, and managed to loosen it slightly, but he doubted whether he would be able to get his hands free or not.

It was nearly midnight, Dick judged, before the Tories were asleep. All had thrown themselves down around the fire, with the exception of one man, who stood on guard, over at the point where the passage entered the cavern.

About once in every half hour this sentinel would leave the cavern and walk down the passageway a distance of fifty yards or so. Then he would return, and each time he was gone perhaps five minutes.

It was just after he had disappeared on one of these tours of investigation that Dick was given a surprise. He saw Agnes Donald rise from the blanket where she lay, at some distance from the fire, and approach him.

She came with quick, but cautious steps, and she looked fearfully in the direction of the Tories lying around the fire. Especially did she watch the form of Black Bob, for he was the most dangerous man of all.

There was no stir among the forms, however, and it was evident that all were asleep.

"Sh!" the girl whispered, kneeling by Dick's side. "Don't make any noise. I have come to free you!"

"I am glad to hear you say that, miss!" said Dick. He was amazed, but was too glad to have aid to stop to question the girl regarding her motives in offering to free him. "I will roll over, and then you can free my hands."

He did so.

The girl did not take the time that would have been necessary in order to untie the rope. Instead, she cut it, and also the rope binding his feet.

"Now you are free," she whispered. "One thing only I ask, and that is that you do not kill the guard yonder—that is, if you can help it, and escape. I wish you to escape, however."

"One moment," whispered Dick. "Why have you done this?"

"Because I hate Black Bob Dobson!"

There was no mistaking the earnestness with which the girl spoke. Her eyes fairly gleamed as she glanced in the direction of the sleeping Tory chief.

"But he is a relative of yours."

"I know; and he persuaded my father to become a Tory, when in reality father was inclined to patriotism. But for Black Bob we would be in Savannah, living like people should, instead of herding here in this terrible place with these desperadoes. And I would not now be responsible for my sweetheart being in trouble."

"You mean James Somers?"

"Yes."

"He is unworthy of you, Miss Agnes."

"I know; he betrayed father and I to save himself, but he would not have had to do that if I had not led him to become a traitor. I was to blame, and it served me right."

"Why don't you and your father come away with me, Miss Agnes; then perhaps all will come out right in the end. If you remain here with these desperadoes you will both come to harm."

"I think father will go; he more than half promised to do so. He knows that I am freeing you, and gave his con-

sent, for he, too, hates Black Bob for getting him into his present trouble."

"Is he awake?"

"Yes."

"Well, go and persuade him to come along out of here with me; I will slip across to the passage, and be ready to take care of the sentinel when he comes back."

"Very well."

The girl stole back to where her father was lying, and Dick rose and made his way cautiously toward the passage.

He passed a number of the Tories, and paused long enough beside one to pick up a belt in which were two pistols and a knife. The fellow had taken it off in order to rest more comfortably.

The "Liberty Boy" buckled the belt on, and was soon at the entrance to the passage.

He had scarcely reached there before he heard the sound of footsteps.

The sentinel was coming!

The youth drew a pistol, took hold of the barrel, and waited.

A few moments later the Tory guard stepped into the cavern, and as he did so Dick dealt him a strong blow on the head with the butt of the pistol.

He dropped like a log.

He gave utterance to a stifled groan as he fell, and his body striking the ground made some noise, and the youth was afraid that some of the Tories would be aroused. But they slept on.

He turned his gaze toward where Agnes Donald and her father were, and as he looked Mr. Donald rose to a standing posture, after which both stole across the cavern toward where Dick stood.

Presently they were at Dick's side, and the girl whispered:

"We are going with you!"

"Good!" said Dick. "Come along."

He led the way from the cavern, and just as they were leaving it a hoarse roar of rage went up, and Black Bob Dobson leaped to his feet, and jerked a pistol out of his belt.

"Hol' on, theer!" he yelled. "Hol' on, I say, er I'll put er bullet through ye!" Then to his men he cried:

"Up, boys! ther pris'ner is escapin'!"

CHAPTER. XII.

THE ESCAPE.

But before Black Bob could fire, if indeed he intended doing so, the fugitives were out of the cavern, and running along the passage.

"We will have to hurry," said Dick. "The entire gang will be after us in a jiffy!"

Mr. Donald was in front, Agnes was next, and Dick

brought up the rear. This was the most dangerous place, and the "Liberty Boy" was always ready to assume the most dangerous position.

He held the pistol in his hand, only he had reversed it, and now held it by the butt.

He kept glancing back over his shoulder, but could not see anything. He could hear, however, and soon realized that they were being pursued.

He could hear the wild and angry yells of the pursuers.

As they ran Dick was thinking, and thinking fast.

He realized that they were in a dangerous situation.

He would not have been afraid, in so far as himself was concerned, for he believed he could easily have escaped had he been alone.

He thought it likely that Mr. Donald would be able to escape also if he had only himself to look out for; but there was the girl.

Of course they would remain with her, and they could hardly expect a girl to be able to outrun a hundred determined ruffians like the members of Black Bob Dobson's band.

Still, they would make the attempt.

They might succeed in hiding in the depths of the timber, and by throwing the enemies off the scent succeed in getting away ultimately.

Onward they moved, as rapidly as was possible.

All three had been over the route, of course, and were fairly familiar with the crookings and windings, and it did not take long to emerge from the passageway underneath the bridge.

They hastened onward, under the bridge, made a half-circuit, climbed up the slope to the road, and ran down it as fast as they could.

Behind them they heard the wild yells of their enemies.

Onward they ran.

Agnes ran very swiftly for awhile, but soon began to pant, and slowed considerable.

"Are you tired, Miss Agnes?" asked Dick.

"Y-yes," gasped the girl. "I fear I cannot run much farther."

"Give your father and myself your hands; we will help you along."

The girl obeyed, and they ran in this fashion for quite a ways, the two men rendering the girl enough aid so that she was enabled to get along in much better style.

The yells of their pursuers grew more and more loud, however, and it was evident that the desperadoes were coming closer and closer.

"They will overtake us, if—you—stay—with me," panted the girl. "You—two—leave me, and—save yourselves."

"Never!" said Dick.

"No, indeed!" from her father.

"But—they—won't—harm—me."

"You don't know that," replied Dick. "They will be so angry on account of my escape that they will be in a mood for anything, and will wreak vengeance on anybody."

Then, too, they will suspect that you freed me, and they would be very angry with you."

"True," the girl acknowledged. "But it—is hard—that you—and father—should suffer—for me."

"Why, but for you I should still be a prisoner in the cavern, Miss Agnes, and therefore I owe it to you to stay with you, and share your fortunes, whatever they may be. If you cannot escape, then I will not."

"You are as brave and noble-hearted as we have always heard you were, Mr. Slater," said the man.

"Indeed—he—is, father!"

"It is only right and just that I should stay with those who have rendered me aid," was Dick's reply.

The youth listened intently, and soon became convinced that the enemy would soon overtake them, unless they dodged them in some way.

"We will have to play some kind of a trick on them," he said. "Why not turn aside, and double on them, like a fox does on the hounds?"

"We will do whatever you say, Mr. Slater," replied Mr. Donald.

"Then let us turn aside, and ascend the hillside. Perhaps by so doing we may throw our pursuers off the track."

"Very well."

They left the road and moved up the hillside, going in a diagonal line.

Of course they could not go so fast; but they hoped that they would thus throw their pursuers off the scent, when speed would not make any particular difference.

Up and still up they went.

Finally they came to the top of the hill.

Here they paused and listened.

They could still hear the yells of the guerrillas, but the sound was faint, proving that the desperadoes were quite a distance away.

"Do you think we are safe now?" asked the girl, in a faint voice.

"It is hard telling, Miss Agnes," replied Dick. "I rather think, however, that we will be safe for awhile, at any rate."

"And shall we remain here?"

"I would prefer, on your account, to find some place of shelter."

"Oh, never mind about me."

The hill which they were on was in reality a long ridge, with alternating high and low places. The ridge, so far as Dick could judge, pointed toward Savannah, and so, after a few moments of thought he said:

"Let us walk along the top of this ridge, in this direction," indicating by a gesture. "It will lead us toward Savannah, and perhaps we may find shelter somewhere."

"Very well, Mr. Slater," said Mr. Donald.

They set out at once.

They walked slowly, and paused occasionally to listen.

This gave Agnes time to rest, and also enabled them to exercise care, and keep from being surprised by the Tories.

They had gone perhaps a mile when they came upon a little log cabin, which nestled in among some trees, and was hard to see in the night-time. Indeed, they had come within an ace of passing it.

"Perhaps this is just the place we are looking for," said Dick. "I will knock and arouse the inmates."

He advanced to the door, and was about to knock, when he heard what sounded like a groan.

"Somebody in pain in there," thought the youth.

Instead of knocking he tried the door.

It opened to his touch.

Looking into the room, he saw that a candle was burning, on a little table at one side.

He stepped into the room, and looked around.

In a cot at one side lay an old man. It was he who had given utterance to the groan that Dick had heard.

"Come in, Mr. Donald and Miss Agnes," said Dick, and then he advanced to the old man's side, and spoke to him.

The old man opened his eyes, with a little cry, and exclaimed in a weak, quivering voice:

"So you have followed me here to finish your dastardly work, have you Black Bob Dobson?"

"I am not Black Bob Dobson, sir," said Dick in a gentle voice. "Can't you see that?"

"Ah, yes. I see now that I was mistaken. But who are you?"

"We are fugitives who have just escaped from Black Bob's clutches, and we wish to remain here in your cabin, if you don't object."

"I don't object," was the faint reply. "Anybody who is an enemy of Black Bob Dobson's is a friend of mine, and you—are welcome."

"Did Black Bob wound you?" asked Dick. "I gathered from your words just now that such was the case."

"Yes; he shot me down on the road a couple of miles from here yesterday, and took my money, leaving me for dead. But I wasn't dead, and I managed to get here to my cabin. But I don't know whether I will get well or not. I don't know."

"Let me examine your wound," said Dick. "Mr. Donald, hold the candle here, please."

The man obeyed, and Dick made an examination of the wound.

Black Bob's bullet had struck the old man in the right shoulder, and the shock had no doubt rendered him unconscious, thus deceiving the desperado into the belief that he had killed the old man. It was an ugly wound, but Dick thought the man might pull through in safety, and told him so.

"I hope so, I hope so," was the reply, but it was evident that he had his doubts regarding the matter.

The "Liberty Boy" dressed the wound, and then turned to his two companions.

"I'll tell you what I have decided upon," he said. "I will leave you here, and I will at once set out for Savannah. I will get my 'Liberty Boys,' and will return as quickly as possible, and then we will see if we cannot put

an end to the career of Black Bob, by scattering his band to the four winds, or capturing the desperadoes."

"If you can do that you will be doing a wonderful thing for the people of these parts," said the old man, feebly.

"Well, we will do it, I am confident, Mr. Samuels," said Dick. The old man had given his name as Thomas Samuels, and said that he had lived in the little cabin alone, for many years, he having no relatives that he knew of.

Having decided upon his course, Dick did not lose any time. Telling Mr. Donald to fasten the door behind him, he bade the three good-by, and took his departure.

He hastened away in the direction of Savannah.

"I will walk until I come to the home of a settler," he said. "Then I will help myself to a horse, and get to the city easily before daylight. Then, to eat some breakfast and get my 'Liberty Boys' into the saddle. Back we will come, and I will wager something that before to-morrow night Black Bob's band will be a thing of the past!"

CHAPTER XIII.

DICK'S CLEVER SCHEME.

Dick walked rapidly, but paused frequently to listen.

He had not forgotten that there were at least one hundred desperadoes scouring the country for himself and two friends.

"I will dodge them, all right, however," he said to himself. "Alone, I have no fears of being captured."

Half an hour later he heard the sound of voices, and soon he heard footsteps.

A party of the desperadoes was close at hand.

The youth hid, however, and some of the Tories passed within arm's-length of him.

They were on their way back to the cavern, mad and disgusted at their failure to overtake the fugitives, and they were giving free and full expression to their feelings.

From their talk Dick learned that they were on their way back to the cavern.

He heard them discussing the matter of whether or not they would be in danger if they remained in their rendezvous, and he was glad to hear a number express the belief that they would not be in any danger.

"W'y, an army couldn't git us outer thar, boys," said one. "Et's ther safest place in ther worl' fur us."

Others said the same, and the "Liberty Boy" smiled to himself, and thought that they would find out they were badly mistaken.

The desperadoes passed on, in utter unconsciousness of the fact that the youth they were so eager to catch was within a few yards of them, and then Dick hastened onward.

He did not encounter any more of the Tories, and twenty minutes later he came to the home of a settler.

He made his way to the stable, entered, bridled and saddled a horse—he having found the bridle and saddle after considerable search in the darkness—and then, leading the horse out of the stable, and to the road, the youth mounted and rode away at a gallop.

He was now on the main road leading to Savannah, and continued onward steadily, till he reached the city, which he did at about three o'clock.

He attended to the horse, and then entered the quarters occupied by the "Liberty Boys," and threw himself down on his blanket and was soon asleep.

He was up before daylight, however, and at once aroused the youths.

They were delighted when they saw Dick.

"We had begun to be afraid the Tories had gobbled you up, Dick!" said Bob Estabrook.

"They did gobble me, too, Bob," was the smiling reply.

"They did?"

The youths were all on the qui vive, and asked Dick to tell them all about it.

He did so, and when they learned that Dick knew the hiding-place of the enemy, and had come to lead them to it, they were delighted.

"That is fine, Dick!" cried Bob. "And the scoundrels are not in a swamp at all?"

"No, quite the opposite."

"Say, they are pretty smart fellows, after all, aren't they?" from Mark Morrison.

"Well, that leader of theirs, Black Bob, is smart enough, and his choosing such a hiding-place, and then giving it out that they rendezvoused in a swamp, proves that he is shrewd."

"So he is; but he'll find that there are others who are even shrewder than himself, Dick."

"I think so, Bob."

Then the youths cooked and ate their breakfast, after which Dick told them to get ready for the trip, while he went and had an interview with General Howe.

"I wish to report to him," said the youth.

He hastened away, and was soon in the presence of General Howe, who greeted him joyously.

"I was afraid that Black Bob had captured you, Captain Slater," he said.

"And he did capture me, sir," was the reply. "But I succeeded in making my escape."

"Indeed! Tell me all, Captain Slater."

The youth did so, and then added that he and his "Liberty Boys" would go that day, and strike the Tory band a blow that would result in forcing it to cease operations.

"Good!" said the general. "Do you wish any assistance? I will send some of the soldiers with you, if you wish."

"Thank you, sir. But I don't think we will need assistance; and then your men would have to walk, and they

could scarcely reach the rendezvous of the desperadoes before night, while we on horseback can get there in a few hours."

"Just as you like, Mr. Slater; but I fear that you may need help, for the Tories outnumber you two to one."

"True; but we shall take them by surprise, and that will more than equalize matters."

"I suppose it will."

"Yes, indeed."

"Well, I wish you success, and that you may break up that band of murderous scoundrels without much loss to your own company of brave boys, Captain Slater."

"Thank you, sir; we will get through, all right, I am confident."

After a few more words, Dick bade the general good-by, and took his departure.

The "Liberty Boys" were ready to start when he got to their quarters.

They had bridled and saddled his horse, as well as the horse he had ridden to Savannah on that morning, and they at once set out.

The news had gone out that the rendezvous of the Tory band under Black Bob had been discovered, and the soldiers were out, ready to give the boys a good send-off.

This they did, cheering them as they rode away, and the youths answered with their battle cry, and also with cheers; and just before getting out of sight they took off their hats and waved them.

Then they dashed onward at a gallop.

Two hours and a half later they arrived at the home of the settler from whose stable Dick had taken the horse.

To their surprise, they found a party of at least fifty young men gathered there.

They were armed to the teeth, and told Dick that they were out for the purpose of hunting till they found the hiding-place of Black Bob and his band, when they were going to get up a little army of two hundred, and exterminate the Tories.

When Dick told them that he had already discovered the rendezvous of the band the youths were delighted, and asked to be permitted to accompany the "Liberty Boys" and help exterminate Black Bob's band.

"We have suffered for several months, and we think it only right that we should have a hand in putting the scoundrels to death, or help in capturing them," the leader of the party said.

"Very well. You shall go with us," said Dick.

"Is it far?" the young fellow asked. "If so, we will scatter to our homes and get our horses."

"No, it is only a couple of miles from here," was the reply. "You won't need your horses."

"You don't mean to say that Black Bob's band has its headquarters so close as that?" the youth exclaimed.

"Yes," and then Dick told where the rendezvous was.

The youths were almost stricken dumb with amazement when they learned this.

"It beats anything I ever heard of," said one, and the rest said the same.

The settler at whose home the youths were gathered was a patriot, and when Dick led his horse to him, and explained who he was and why he had "borrowed" the animal, the settler said it was all right, and that he was glad Dick had taken the horse, and hoped the "Liberty Boys" would succeed in breaking up the band of guerrillas.

"It will be a great day for the patriots of these parts, if you do succeed," he said.

"You are right, sir; at least so I judge from all I can hear regarding the dastardly work of Black Bob and his band."

"You are right; they are fiends, and they have been a veritable thorn in the flesh for several months."

"Well, we will endeavor to pluck the thorn out," was the grim reply.

"I hope you will succeed, sir."

"I hope so, sir. I think we shall succeed. We have the best of it, as it stands now, I think."

Then Dick gave the order to move.

The "Liberty Boys" rode in advance of the party of young men of the vicinity, but went only so fast as the youths could walk.

Half an hour later, when they were within half a mile of the rendezvous of the Tory band, Dick gave the order that they halt and dismount.

This was done.

Then the horses were led out from the road, a distance of two hundred yards, and were tied to trees.

Then the party moved forward, slowly and cautiously, for Dick thought it possible that the desperadoes might attempt an ambush.

He sent scouts ahead, to guard against a surprise of this kind, but no Tories were seen, and they reached the bridge, and came to a stop.

While coming Dick had explained fully to his men.

They knew just what was expected of them.

He had decided that twenty of the farmer-boys should pass beneath the bridge and make their way up the passage leading to the cavern. They were to fire upon any of the Tories whom they might catch sight of, and while they were attracting the attention of the desperadoes he and the main party of youths would break through from Mr. Warren's cabin, into the cavern, and attack the desperadoes from behind.

It was a splendid plan, and twenty of the youths at once made their way in under the bridge, and started up the narrow, winding passageway, leading to the cavern.

When they had gone only a short distance, they caught sight of a man in the semi-darkness ahead, and fired upon him.

They wounded the fellow, they knew, for they heard him give utterance to a cry of pain, and then he retreated rapidly. They followed, firing occasionally, and as soon as

Dick heard the sound of the shots, he motioned to his men, and hastened up the hillside toward the cabin home of Mr. Warren and his daughter Jennie.

Both were at home, and when Dick hurriedly explained the situation, and told them what he wished to do, they excitedly said for him to go ahead.

Dick and a number of the youths rushed into the cabin, and seizing the logs in the fireplace, carried them, burning still, out of doors and threw them on the ground. Then the embers and coals were carried out in a shovel, after which Dick pointed to some long logs, and told the youths to seize them, and enter the cabin.

"You boys with the logs will knock out the thin wall of earth," explained Dick. "And then we will rush through the hole and attack the Tories. Are you all ready?"

The youths said they were; and it could be seen that this was the case, for each and every one had a pistol in either hand.

"Don't shoot one another in the back," said Dick. "Wait till you are in the cavern before firing. The instant you are inside scatter, and pour a deadly fire into the ranks of the desperadoes."

The youths nodded to show they understood, and they got in line, ready to make a rush when the time came.

The youths with the logs entered the cabin, and stationing themselves, swung the logs back, and at the signal from Dick dashed them forward with terrible force.

The wall must have been thinner even than Dick had thought, for the one blow of the two logs was sufficient. A hole several feet in diameter was torn through the wall, and as the youths dropped the logs and leaped out of the way, as they had been instructed to do, the "Liberty Boys" and their farmer-boy allies, dashed through the opening with great speed and celerity, and scattering out, opened fire on the guerrillas, who could be seen bunched over at the point where the passage reached the cavern.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE "LIBERTY BOYS'" JUBILEE.

It was not an encounter. It was simply a slaughter.

The Tories were taken wholly by surprise.

They were bunched, over at the far side of the cavern, as stated, and of course scarcely a bullet was fired by the attacking party that did not find its billet.

The scene which now ensued defies adequate description.

The Tories were falling by the dozens, either dead or wounded, and the yells, shrieks, and groans made it seem a perfect pandemonium.

A few scattering shots were fired by some of the desperadoes, but almost at the very first Black Bob went down with a bullet through his heart, and this took all the fight out of the rest, and they threw down their weapons and begged for their lives.

"Mercy. Mercy! We surrender!" was the cry that went up, and Dick gave the order for the youths to cease firing.

They obeyed.

An hour later the Tories who had not been killed, and those who were only slightly wounded, were standing out in front of the Warren cabin, with their hands bound, and guarded by some of the "Liberty Boys."

Then the seriously wounded were brought forth, and it was found that there were ten of these. A further examination, and count, showed that sixty-seven of the desperadoes were lying dead within the cavern.

Among them was, as already stated, Black Bob Dobson.

It was decided to leave the dead bodies where they were, as it was a fitting burial-place for the desperadoes. They had made the cavern their headquarters while committing their depredations, and it seemed fitting that it should be their grave.

The "Liberty Boys" had not suffered any to speak of; four had been wounded, but no one was killed. The Tories had fired only a few shots, and those had been discharged without aim.

The farmer-boys were delighted. They were glad that they had been able to help put an end to the Tory band.

The entire party now set out for the home of Mr. Harley, the patriot at whose home the farmer boys had been gathered.

Great was the delight of Mr. Harley and the members of his family when they learned the result of the affair.

"The people of this part of the country will be wild with delight," the man said. "I would suggest, Captain Slater, that we have a big jollification here at my house, in honor of the affair."

"A sort of Jubilee, eh?" exclaimed Bob Estabrook, who was standing near.

"Yes."

"Well, I am willing," said Dick. "It is certainly a great day for the great cause, for the guerrillas have done a great deal of damage among the patriots."

"You are right," agreed Mr. Harley, "and if you say th

word, and will lend some of the boys horses, they will ride far and wide, and carry the glad tidings to the patriot families, who will come here at once, and bring eatables of all kinds with them, and by two o'clock we will have such a banquet spread on the lawn here in front of my house as was never before seen in these parts.

It was autumn, but the weather was not so very cool, and this day was indeed pleasant, being almost as warm as summer.

"The boys can take the horses," said Dick. "I must confess that the prospects of sitting down to a banquet is too enticing for me to resist. I am in for it."

So were all the "Liberty Boys," and they were loud in their expressions of approval and delight.

The ten severely wounded Tories were taken into an old cabin that had once been occupied by Mr. Harley's family, but which was now used only as a store-house; but the wounded men were made comfortable therein.

The farmer boys, to the number of twenty, mounted horses, and rode away in all directions. They knew what they were to do, and rode away at the best speed of the horses.

After things had been got in shape, Dick walked up the hill, and made his way to the cabin of Thomas Samuels, and found Mr. Donald and Agnes there. They were delighted when they heard of the success that had been Dick's and expressed no regret when they were told that Black Bob was dead.

The old man had died during the night, however, and so Dick and Mr. Donald buried the body near the cabin, after which the three took their departure, and were soon at the home of Mr. Harley.

When the "Liberty Boys" learned that the two were Mr. Donald and his daughter Agnes, who had been responsible for Dick's escape from the hands of Black Bob, they gave the two a royal welcome, and Jennie Warren—she and her father had accompanied the party to Mr. Harley's—took quite a liking to Agnes, and helped to make the girl feel at home. Mr. Warren and Jennie had decided that they could never again live in the house, as it was in too close proximity to the cavern, which was the sepulcher of the Tories.

"We are well acquainted with the Harley's, and will stay there till I can build another house," said Mr. Warren. "And I will build it near the Harley home, as my land adjoins his, and extends to within a quarter of a mile of his house. Then Jennie will not be so lonesome, as we will have near neighbors."

"That will be a good idea," Dick said.

An hour later the neighbors began coming in. Those who had not far to come, got there first, of course, but by one o'clock there was a great crowd present.

At least fifty families of patriots were represented, and in nearly every case each and every member of the family was present.

They came in wagons and on horseback, and some of the nearer ones came on foot.

It was a great occasion, and all were happy.

All brought provisions with them, and Mr. Harley and some of the neighbor boys had already killed an ox, and the huge carcass was roasting nicely over a hastily improvised, but nonetheless effectual furnace.

The Tory prisoners, who were tied together, and sat not far away, watched the preparations for the banquet with sullen looks of anger.

They could not enter into the spirit of the occasion at all, which was natural, of course.

Dick told them that, after the patriots had had their banquet they should have something to eat from what was left of the feast, and the Tories growled angrily.

At last, just as the sun-dial indicated two o'clock, the banquet was ready.

It was spread on tables placed out in the yard, in front of the house, and the people seated themselves on boards, the ends of which were laid on stools and chairs, and in some instances blocks of wood.

Then the work of disposing of the good things was begun.

Mr. Harley acted as master of ceremonies and official carver, and he was a good one, for he brought the roast ox to the table, sliced in the nicest manner imaginable, and it was cooked to a turn.

There was everything good that could be thought of, and that was to be found on the tables of the people in those days, and all did justice to the feast.

The "Liberty Boys" especially enjoyed the banquet, for it was not often that they got a chance to get luxuries to eat.

There were at least fifty maidens present, and this made things more pleasant for the young men, both the "Liberty Boys" and the farmer-boys. The girls were the sweethearts of the latter youths, but the country swains were a generous whole-souled lot, and did not seem to care if their girls paid attention to the handsome "Liberty Boys."

One thing Dick noted with a great deal of pleasure was that both Jennie Warren and Agnes Donald had taken a liking to two of the "Liberty Boys." Harry Ford and Jack Hessley were the youths' names, and they seemed to

be as much struck with the girls as they were with the youths.

"I hope they will fall in love with each other, and make a match of it," thought Dick. "Especially do I wish so on account of Agnes Donald, who was so cheated in her former lover, James Somers, who attempted to make his escape last night, so the general said, and was shot dead."

Dick had told Agnes this, and he had noted that she did not seem to take it very hard. "I don't think she cared so very much for him, after all," the youth thought, "and when he confessed, and was so craven-hearted as to implicate his sweetheart, and practically hand her over to the enemy, to save himself, she had lost much of her liking for him."

Agnes did not tell Dick who had warned her and her father that Somers had confessed, and implicated them, but as the three colored servants disappeared the next night, it was believed that one of the three had carried the news to the two.

At the close of the banquet Dick Slater made a speech which abounded in patriotic utterances, and the "Liberty Boys" and the beautiful maidens applauded him enthusiastically.

Dick was good at this sort of thing, and was, indeed, quite gifted in an oratorical way, and his speech aroused all to a high pitch of enthusiasm.

When Dick had finished and the applause had subsided, Mr. Harley got up and made a speech, in which he thanked Dick Slater and his "Liberty Boys" for ridding the country of such a pest as the band of Black Bob had been.

"This is indeed a great day for the great cause," he said, in conclusion. "And as it is wholly due to the bravery and shrewdness of the 'Liberty Boys,' I suggest that we extend them a vote of thanks."

This met with the approval of all, and when that part of it had been finished, one of the farmer boys suggested that

all remain there that night, and that a big dance be given. The "Liberty Boys" were wild to do this, but Dick wanted to get back to Savannah with the prisoners. Bob Estabrook, Harry Ford, who was struck on Jennie Warren, Jack Hessley, equally struck on Agnes Donald, and about fifty more of the "Liberty Boys" were wild to stay to the dance, and so Dick told them that they could do so, while he and the other fifty "Liberty Boys," who were not particular about remaining, would go on to Savannah with the prisoners.

"You boys come to the city the first thing in the morning, however," he said in conclusion, and they said they would.

An hour later the fifty "Liberty Boys," with the prisoners in their midst, set out, and they kept right on till they reached Savannah, which was about midnight. The ten wounded Tories were left behind, to be brought to the city as soon as possible.

The prisoners were placed in some empty houses, the homes of Tories who had fled, and guards were set on them, and then the youths went to their quarters and to bed.

Next morning, when General Howe learned of the complete success of the "Liberty Boys," he was delighted, and the whole city went wild with joy.

There would be no more pillaging and murdering by Black Bob Dobson and his band of Destroyers, and that was sufficient to make the patriots happy.

The other fifty "Liberty Boys" arrived in Savannah at noon, and although they were sleepy, they were also happy, and they declared that their comrades who had come to Savannah the night before, had missed half their life.

"We had a great time, I tell you!" said Bob Estabrook. "It was a Jubilee, sure enough!"

At the close of the war, Harry Ford and Jack Hessley went back down into Georgia and married Jennie Warren and Agnes Donald, and they never had cause to regret the hour when they made the acquaintance of the maidens.

THE END.

The next number (112) of "The Liberty Boys of '76" will contain THE LIBERTY BOYS CORNERED; OR WHICH WAY SHALL WE TURN?" by Harry Moore.

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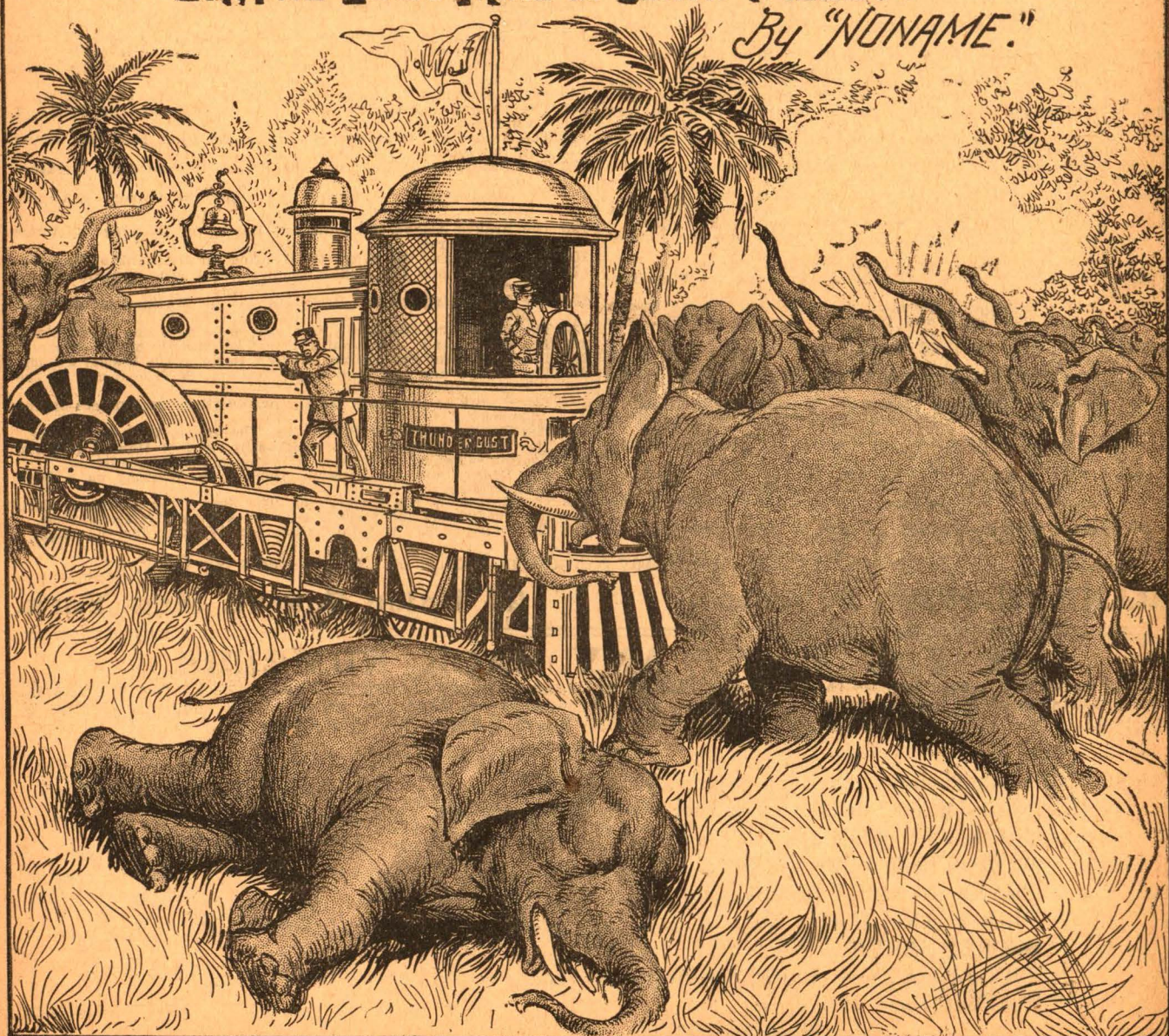
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